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BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
951 UNION BOULEVARD  
CASPER, WYOMING 82601

CLASS I HISTORIC RESOURCE STUDY

VOLUME I. NARRATIVE HISTORY

Prepared for the Casper District of the  
Bureau of Land Management

BY: Western Interpretive Services  
P.O. Box 6467  
Sheridan, Wyoming 82801

February 1978

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INTRODUCTION

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This study has been prepared under the terms of Contract Number WY910-CT7-2358, issued by the Wyoming State Office of the Bureau of Land Management in Cheyenne.

The primary goal of the project is to provide a substantial synthesis of published sources and supplemental materials covering the whole range of historic period occupation and use of the region. This document can serve as a point of departure for more detailed Class II and Class III studies that will arise concerning localities and specific tracts involved in various kinds of developments requiring Bureau clearances.

Technical sections of the report comment upon the historiography of the region under study, and identify sites that federal, state and local authorities believe may possess historic significance as that term is understood under the Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and subsequent legislation and regulations.

Principal investigator on this project was Robert A. Murray, A.B., M.S., (Ph.D. Candidate) with over 25 years of experience in the history of the region. Significant blocks of material utilized in the project were derived from Western Interpretive Services files, developed by Mr. Murray, with the aid of a number of other experienced researchers working as consultants to or employees of Western Interpretive Services.

Major published materials for the project files were largely obtained on loan from local libraries and on interlibrary loan. The Sheridan County Fulmer Public Library, the Wyoming State Library and other more distant interlibrary loan sources were all particularly helpful in this phase of the work. Specialized resources of the Library at Sheridan College proved useful at a number of points.

While the emphasis in a Class I study as presently constituted and described in the contract for the project lies in the use of published source materials, we have extended the work into the major collections of documentary materials in the region. Particularly we have made use of files at the

Wyoming State Archives and Historical Department in Cheyenne, the Western History Research Center of the University of Wyoming, the South Dakota State Historical Society at Pierre, and the Western History Department of the Denver Public Library. Other significant materials came from the Billings Public Library, from Montana Historical Society in Helena, from Montana State University at Bozeman, from Fort Laramie National Historic Site, from the Museum of the Fur Trade at Chadron, Nebraska, and from a number of smaller collections in the region.

Report sections outlining the physiographic setting and the aboriginal occupancy of the region are not intended to be definitive, but to merely set forth the nature of the region to which historic period travelers and settlers came. They are none-the-less derived from substantial review of the literature in their respective fields.

Overall, the narrative portions of the report may have a considerable utility to professionals, technicians and management personnel in the District, State and other offices of the BLM. We have tried to make it both interesting and readable so that a broad range of Bureau personnel might use it effectively to become acquainted with the past interaction between land and people that has created the management situations they face today.



DEDICATION:

To Nettie Wright, 1880's pioneer of genteel pleasure in the Powder River Country, and to a few unpaid volunteers of equal understanding who have helped add persepective and enliven the dusty pace of research these 20 years in the country.

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I. THE GEOGRAPHIC SETTING





## MULTI-MILLION-YEAR BEGINNINGS

The past generation's research in the structure and activity of the Earth's crust has opened up a whole new era of speculation about the formation and movement of crustal segments that form the foundation of the continents. Whatever the implications of the current studies on our understanding of the earliest days of continent forming, it may not alter very much our perception of the creation of the directly functional features of the physical setting that greeted early visitors to this region in historic times.<sup>1</sup>

For many, many millions of years, sequences of uplift and depression in the area that is today North America were accompanied by long periods of erosion of some areas and deposition in others. During much of this time, Wyoming's present landscape lay in vast lake-beds or shallow seas with the result that deep layers of various sediments were laid down. Today these layers survive as strata of limestone, sandstone, shale and clays that form the mantle rock over much of the Study Area for this project. This same process of deposition resulted in the emplacement of the raw materials from which subsequent geologic change produced deposits of coal, petroleum, uranium, bentonite and a variety of minor alkaline minerals that have come to have historic significance to Wyoming in more recent times.

The framework of today's Wyoming was largely created in the process and the wake of the Laramide Revolution, a major epoch of mountain-building some 60 million years ago. Then in a process millions of years in length, the State's major mountain ranges and some of its lesser topographic features were uplifted. The Laramie Range, the Big Horns and the Black Hills all date from this period.

At the outset, the Big Horns, along the western flank of our Study Area were uplifted as a vast arch of relatively short radius and under high stresses. The Black Hills came up as a lower but substantial uplifted dome. The Laramie Range extended into the Study Area in part as a high arch and then as a broken fold in the Laramie Peak area to terminate

in the steep mountain face created by the faulted uplift of Casper Mountain,

Lesser uplifted features include the Hartville Uplift, Rawhide Mountain, Tisdale Mountain and the southern tip of the Wolf Mountain.

Beginning while the uplifting was still in process, erosion stripped away massive layers of older sediments. In a few areas, the capping layers over the sedimentary rocks were resistant enough to protect them to some degree. Here, high, flattopped buttes like those in the Salt-Creek country, and the Pumpkin Buttes were left standing.

Northwest of the Black Hills, an intrusion of liquid rock formed igneous plugs that later erosion exposed to leave the well-known Devil's Tower and its neighbors the Missouri Buttes.

The region's drainage patterns developed from run-off from the faces of major uplifts which flowed together with the lesser runoff from vast areas of what must have originally been high saddles between the drainages. The southern part of the District drains largely to the eastward through the North Platte River and its tributaries. Main tributaries of this stream are the Laramie River and its affluent the Chugwater, and the Rawhide Creek, which is the only principal tributary of the North Platte to enter from the North.

Elevations range from the highest point, Clouds Peak in the Big Horns at 13,165 ft., to a point on the Belle Fourche River in the northeastern corner of the state at about 3,100 ft., the lowest point in Wyoming.

The several forks of Powder River, along with Crazy Woman Creek, Clear Fork, Piney Creek all drain the eastern face of the Big Horns largely into Powder River. The north-east-facing portion of the Big Horn within Wyoming supplies waters to the Tongue River draining into the Little Horn.

The main headwaters of the Cheyenne River of South Dakota which are the Belle Fourche River and the South Fork of Cheyenne River, embrace the Black Hills and draw off most of its annual runoff, and also drain some portions of the great

saddle between the Powder and North Platte basins.

A small tract in the northern part of present Campbell and Crook Counties is drained by the Little Missouri. A still smaller tract in southern Weston County drains directly eastward into the Niobrara.

All of the major streams of the District are deeply entrenched below the general level of the surrounding country. Within these entrenched valleys they have developed courses that often meander extensively between the valley walls. For the northward flowing streams like the Tongue, the Powder and the Little Missouri, this further complicates the problems of spring runoff, when considerable land in the central part of the district loses its snow cover before stream channels are clear of ice at their downstream ends.

Throughout the district only the main streams, fed by mountain snows and heavier mountain rainfall are year-around streams. Many of the smaller tributaries are intermittent in flow and highly variable year to year.

With the exception of certain areas in the higher mountains, most of this area escaped the direct effects of the Pleistocene glaciation, and the impact of the Pleistocene climatic situation in this region was in the main an impact on vegetation, wildlife and on man, whose earliest evidences found to date in the region is from the closing years of that epoch.<sup>2</sup>

## THE CLIMATE

Two main factors determine the climate of northeastern Wyoming:

First, the high wall of successive mountain ranges to the west extracts virtually all moisture from air moving inland from the Pacific toward the region.

Second, Wyoming lies nearly 1500 miles from the most practicable source of atmospheric moisture, the Gulf of Mexico. Only the monsoon-effect of continental air heating in the summer can draw in really significant amounts of moisture, and only major winter cyclonic disturbances can draw moist air this far inland in substantial quantity.

The result is a climate that at all the lower elevations within the Study Area is semi-arid, and in some areas approaches desert conditions. Most useful precipitation occurs between mid-March and mid-July. Only the highest part of the Big Horns and the Black Hills receives more than 20 inches of precipitation in an average year. In the driest years of record, as little as two to three inches of precipitation has fallen on much of the Powder River Basin during the growing season.

In general, summers might be characterized as short and hot at the lower elevations. Winters are long, but broken by frequent thaws, particularly in a chinook wind belt in the east of the Big Horns and the Laramie Range, and including much of the North Platte Valley east of Casper. Individual winter storms can extend over wide areas, tying up all types of ground transportation for periods of several days.

Both summer and winter are characterized by extreme differentials between day and night temperatures, a differential of 30 to 50 degrees on a given day not being uncommon.

The growing season over most of the lowland portion of the Study Area ranges from 120 to 135 days each year. A limiting factor for some kinds of plant growth occurs in the fact that isolated early and late frosts can take a heavy toll of sensitive plants. Low nighttime temperatures through the entire growing season confine the growth of certain crops like corn to limited areas in and near the North Platte Valley.<sup>3</sup>

## VEGETATION

Available moisture tends to sort out vegetation primarily according to elevation of the land. A little land in southern Goshen and Platte Counties and a narrow belt along the eastern foot of the Big Horns and the Laramie range has a turf cover of short to mid-sized grasses. Much of the rest of the low land areas within the region under study is covered with a mixture of bunch grasses, sage and forbs. Scattered cottonwood and willow growth occurs along practically all the stream courses through the lower lands. Rough breaks in the more heavily eroded areas are likely to have some juniper ("cedar") growing on them, particularly along north slopes.

Pine forests occur in the Black Hills, the Big Horns and the Laramie Range, generally at elevations above 5,000 to 5,500 feet. There are some pines on other elevated tracts such as the Hartville Hills, the divide between the Cheyenne and the Powder, and on outliers to the Black Hills. Often these pine forests at the lower elevations of pine growth are relatively open, with some park like areas where they interfinger with up slope grasslands.

The crest of the Big Horn range at the western boundary of the Study Area reaches elevations from 10 to 13,000 feet above the sea. In the upper 2,000 feet of these mountains there are some areas with a true alpine tundra character to their vegetation.<sup>4</sup>





## WILDLIFE

Wyoming's plains country played host to abundant large game in the wake of the Pleistocene period. In the subsequent drying out of the country, some species migrated out, others died out for reasons not yet too clear, and still others replaced them.

Through the late prehistoric period basic wildlife populations included many of the same species present today. Buffalo, antelope, elk both whitetail deer and mule deer, wild sheep, the rocky mountain goat, and a host of lesser vegetarian species formed the prey of primitive man, and ofizzly bears, black bears, wolves, cougars, coyotes, foxes and smaller predators. Most of the same range of feathered game and predators were present here, too.

Trout populations in the mountain streams and near the foot of the mountains were probably larger than those of the present.

While game populations were substantial, it is important to recognize that the carrying capacity for any combination of species has finite limits in any given locality and in any given year's weather circumstances. In general, most portions of the Study Area would under late prehistoric conditions have had a markedly lower carrying capacity for game than the tall-grass prairie country of the eastern part of the Dakotas, Nebraska and Kansas. This factor would become important in late prehistoric and early historic times when major shifts of Indian population took place as a result of factors other than the physical environment.<sup>5</sup>





NOTES ON PART I.

1. N.M. Fenneman, Physiography of the Western Unites States, (N.Y. McGraw Hill 1931.)
2. R.F. Flint, Glacial Geology and the Pleistoscene Epoch, (N.Y., 1947.)
3. J.R. Borchert, "The Climate of the Central North American Grasslands, "Annals of the Association of American Geographers, Vol. IL, No. 1, (1950), 1-39.
4. J.B. Kincer, "The Climate of the Great Plains as a Factor in their Utilizations, "Annals of the Association of American Geographers, Vol. XIII, No. 1 (1923).
5. Kincer, op.cit.

also: Practical contact with ranching over the last 40 years has given the principal investigator some experience at evaluating range conditions himself. Much of this land will not carry more than one cow to c.35 acres, some of it less, and there is some 20-25 acre land near the base of the Big Horns, but not much. Predation, unchecked disease, etc. probably kept buffalo populations sharply below these heavy managed-grazing levels most of the time parts of the Study Area.



II. PREHISTORIC MAN IN THE REGION



We would like to emphasize that the data presented in Part II should not be interpreted as substituting for the full professional discussion of the activities of prehistoric man in the Casper District. This would be provided in a Class I. Archeological and Ethnohistorical Study by other scholars at another time.

Rather, our discussion herein is intended to form a part of the basic context for historic period human activity, comparable in its own way to the coverage we gave to the natural setting in Part I. of this study. It should help to provide a better rounded view of the region to which the first explorers of our own cultural group came, and a more coherent picture of the interface between the historic and prehistoric cultural groups from the opening of historic times through the completion of U.S. conquest of the area in 1876-78.

Early anthropologists built a considerable case for a very short period of human use on the high plains, but in the 1920's, 30's and 40's, extensive new archeological discoveries pushed back the frontier of known occupation to the period 10,000 to 13,000 years ago. Surveys over a broad area of the southwestern deserts of Wyoming recorded indications of what might be a still earlier occupancy. Very little material has been developed on this earliest possible occupancy of the region, and few evidences of it exist within the Casper District.<sup>1</sup> But during the past 50 years a wealth of data has come to light on the intervening human use of the plains.

From 6,000 to 13,000 years ago the region had a climate more mild and more moist than that of recent times. The greater forage resources (particularly in the early edge of that period) supported an extensive population of game. The Columbian mammoth, large and long-horned varieties of bison formed the main sustenance for the peoples who developed a highly specialized series of hunting cultures dependent on large game. The various cultural levels involved developed highly distinctive techniques of stone work for projectile points, cutting tools and probably ornamental and ceremonial objects. Extensive work at well stratified major sites in the past 50 years has detailed the time relationships between the groups involved.<sup>2</sup>

From the close of that period until the time perhaps 2500 years ago, the lower elevations in the region had a climate generally at least as dry, and often much drier than at present. Less specialized foraging/hunting cultures made intensive use of the plant and animal resources of the region. But the constraints of this kind of existence probably meant that the region supported a very, very thinly scattered population with the exception of some localities that offered possibilities for seasonal exploitation of highly varied resources at different elevations with minimal relocation from season to season.<sup>3</sup>

Roughly around 500 B.C., new cultural traits penetrated the region, particularly along the North Platte. Showing some affinity with woodland cultures to the east, these people have been labeled "plains-woodland" by the archeologists. They may have been the first to introduce the art of pottery making, the use of the bow and arrow, and the domesticated dog to the southeastern corner of the study area.<sup>4</sup>

Not too much is really known of the occupants of the area from that point forward until about 1200 A.D. Most of them away from the river valleys probably had some affinity with the "desert cultures" of the intermountain basins further to the south west and may represent a continuation of the cultural groups dominant in much of the dry middle prehistoric period.

In the period roughly 1200 to 1450 A.D. it is theorized that a substantial movement of Athabaskan peoples broke loose from the subarctic of present Canada and pushed southward over the high plains and through the intermountain basins. Some anthropologists feel that the bulk of those moving south through the basins were to become the ancestors of the modern Navaho, while those who migrated slowly but steadily down over the plains became known in historic times as the Apache.<sup>5</sup>

Not long after this, the European settlements and trading posts on the fringes of the continent began to pour a steady stream of manufactured goods into the existing intertribal commercial channels of their respective regions. Ultimately, by the early 1700's some of these goods had reached every tribe in this region, and begun to change their way of life through increased productivity as well as through the pressures and opportunities of an accelerated trade.<sup>6</sup>

In the same period, the domesticated horse began to move through trade and raiding from tribe to tribe out of the Spanish settlements of northern Mexico, changing the tribes that came to use it fully as much as the trade goods did in their own way.<sup>7</sup>

It is at this stage that the first makers of historical record materials began to arrive at points close enough to permit them to perceive through their contacts with the Indians what was going on out here in the heart of the high plains country.





1. H.M. Wormington, Ancient Man in North America, (Denver: Denver Museum of Natural History, 1957).

George E. Hyde, Indians of the High Plains, (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1959).

Waldo R. Wedel, Prehistoric Man on the Great Plains, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961).

E.B. Renaud provides some of the best early observational data on surface finds in the 1930's that might represent earlier occupancies of the plains, but at that time even the Folsom point finds represented about the furthest time-frontier that the field could "digest." Renaud's report most relevant to our Study Area is:

E.B. Renaud, "Archeological Survey of the High Western Plains, Seventh Report, Southern Wyoming and Southwestern South Dakota", (Denver: University of Denver, 1936.) This is worth comparing with a recent work on the southwestern deserts:

Richard F. Pourade, Malcolm Rogers, et.al., Ancient Hunters of the Far West, (Los Angeles, 1972).

2. Wormington, op.cit.

Wedel, op.cit.

E.H. Bell and R.E. Cope, "The Rock Shelters of Western Nebraska", in Chapters in Nebraska Archeology, No. 5 (1936), pp. 357-399.

John L. Cotter, "The Occurrence of Flints and Extinct Animals in Pluvial Deposits Near Clovis, New Mexico", Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, Vol. LXXXIX (1937), pp. 1-16.

Edgar B. Howard, "Discovery of Yuma Points in situ, Near Eden, Wyoming", American Antiquity, Vol. VIII, No. 3, (January 1943), pp. 224-234.

Frank H.H. Roberts, Jr. "A Folsom Complex: Preliminary Report on Investigations at the Lindenmeier Site in Northern Colorado", Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, Vol. XCIV, No. 4 (1935).

C. Bertrand Schultz and W.D. Frankforter, "Preliminary Report on the Lime Creek Sites: New Evidence of Early Man in Southwestern Nebraska", Bulletin of the University of Nebraska State Museum, Vol. III, No. 4, Part 2 (1948), pp. 43-62.

Wormington, H.M., "A Proposed Revision of Yuma Point Terminology", Proceedings of the Colorado Museum of Natural History, Vol. XVIII, No. 2 (1948), pp. 1-19.

Frison, George C., "The Plains", in James Fitting, North American Archeology.

3. Frison, op.cit.

Wedel, op.cit.

Bell & Cape, op.cit.

John L. Champe, "Ash Hollow Cave", University of Nebraska Studies, New Series, No. 1, (1946).

4. Champe, op.cit.

5. Hyde, op.cit., presents the best overall narrative synthesis of these contentions, but Jack D. Forbes Apache, Navaho and Spaniard, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 196 ), raises some interesting contentions in the matter.
  6. Carl P. Russell, Guns on the Early Frontiers, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957).
  7. Jack D. Forbes, "The Appearance of the Mounted Indian in Northern Mexico and the Southwest, to 1680," Southwestern Journal of Anthropology, Vol. XV, No. 2, (1959), pp. 189-212.
- John . Ewers, "The Horse in the Blackfoot Indian Culture," BAE Bulletin 159 (1955).
- Francis Haines, "Where Did the Plains Indians Get Their Horses," American Anthropologist, Vol. XL, No. 1, (1938).
- G. Roe, The Indian and the Horse, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955).

III. THE DAWN OF HISTORY, EARLIEST EXPLORERS AND TRADERS

1742 - 1812



### THE "TRADE GOODS REVOLUTION"

Both archeological evidence and the earliest historical accounts from the French and Spanish colonial frontiers indicate that the regions sparse population had a fairly stable subsistence hunting and foraging economy, closely constrained by the resources immediately at hand. Limited transportation systems made most intertribal trade a short-range affair, except for light and valuable decorative items, choice types of stone for chipping and the like.<sup>1</sup>

By the time the first explorers arrived in Wyoming, long standing and reasonably stable systems of adaptation had passed through a period of rapid and in some cases drastic change.

The first of the causes of this change was the infiltration of the horse as a means of transportation. This was coupled with European manufactured goods of both producer (knives, needles, hatchets, lance-points, etc.) and consumer (beads, mirrors, metal decorative items, etc.) kinds through intertribal trade. Such items reached the Snakes first from the south, obtained by their Ute relatives at the Spanish missions and settlements of present New Mexico. Begun in the early 1600's, this trade was well established by the early 1700's. Major historians of the process believe that the Utes had horses as early as 1659, and that the Snakes were well supplied by 1670.<sup>2</sup> There is some evidence that the desert tribes were used to moving considerable distances during their yearly round of foraging. The horse increased this mobility. Together with the labor-saving inherent in the use of metal tools, this let them forage more selectively and less exhaustively. A greater productivity combined with newly developed "needs" for products that could only be obtained through trade increased the opportunities for profitable intertribal and such a trade was very highly developed in the region by the time the first whites of record arrived.<sup>3</sup>

The new mobility and the new weapons changed tribal balances of power.<sup>4</sup> There is considerable evidence that in the period around 1725 to 1770 the Snakes pushed out of the desert and mountain country to harry tribes to the east that were less-well-armed and less-well-mounted. They may have only responded to opportunity along an old frontier of conflict but their new equipment and mobility allowed them to push this frontier for a time as far east as the Black Hills and as far north as the Saskatchewan River. In this same period one of their groups, soon to

become known as the Comanche, pushed off to the east and moved south on the plains to remain out of the study area.<sup>5</sup>

Off to the northeast other tribes were set in motion by conflict, by new productivity and markets and new weapons, and by the lure of horses in the hands of their southwestern neighbors. The northeastern plains saw turbulent shifts of tribal location in the period 1650 to 1770 which by the latter date brought new tribes containing large numbers of well-armed fighting men to confront the over-extended Snakes. Most directly affecting the study area and its northeastern margins in early historic times were the Crows and the Arapaho. Both remained an important part of the historic picture in the region until the arrival of settlement days.<sup>6</sup>

The Crows broke off from the related Hidatsa on the Missouri at some point in the early 1700's to develop a fully mobile, horse-oriented society and economy. They pushed up the Yellowstone Valley, and soon contested the Big Horn Basin and the Wind River Valley with the Shoshoni, and from 1800-1860 virtually controlled the drainage of the Powder, Tongue and lower Big Horn River country.<sup>7</sup>

The Arapaho broke away from their relatives the Atsina (sometimes called Prairie Gros Ventres) and drifted south in front of the mountains, their several bands appearing at enough diverse locations to indicate both an extreme mobility and considerable dispersion of bands.<sup>8</sup>

Progressively the Chippewa and Cree pushed the Sioux. They in turn pushed the Crows and the Cheyennes. The first bands of Sioux crossed the Missouri in 1763, and by the 1790's were roaming seasonally as far west as the eastern foot of the Black Hills.<sup>9</sup>

All the while, trade goods and the horse were progressively altering the Indian society and economy. Horse-raids and counter raids became the main source and kind of intertribal warfare. Horses became the primary standard of value and medium of exchange. The buffalo, representing a highly useful package of food, sinew, bone wrapped in a hide of some utility and value became the main source of raw material for shelter, clothing, food, non-metallic tools and the like. Buffalo hunting and horse raids both required mobility, so any of the physical possessions and the cultural trappings of a sedentary life that could not be made portable dropped by the wayside.<sup>10</sup>



The first fur traders to contact the tribes found them poor prospects for participation in the classic fur trade of the Canadian and Great Lakes region. Wrapped up in buffalo hunting and warfare, they did not possess the same traits of industriousness that endeared some eastern tribes to the traders. Volatile of disposition, aggressive by nature, at first they served mainly as a source of horses and dried meat, mainstays of transportation and food for the traders. Most of this trade in staples took place at the villages of the Mandans, the Hidatsa and the Arikara on the Missouri River, with the tribes out on the plains making annual treks there for the purpose. As the Crows and Cheyenne moved farther west, the Cheyennes took up to some degree the role of middlemen between the river tribes and the Crows and the Arapaho. But it is important to realize that from the outset the equestrian/buffalo hunter pattern of life was in part a commercial economy rather than purely a balanced subsistence economy as some students of Indian lore fancy it.

It is also important to recognize that the Indian's new mobility and his new weapons and tools enabled any given number of Indians to place a greater pressure on selected species of their prey, to range farther in competition for their quarry, and to utilize the products of the chase more extensively for commercial purposes. While the Indian's technological advances enabled him to put more pressure on his environment, his philosophical and religious views gave him no reason to manage this pressure. Basically he presumed that so long as he remained in effective communication with the spiritual powers of the universe those powers would supply an unending stream of sustenance in the form of grass, buffalo, etc!





NOTES ON PART III

1. George E. Hyde, Indians of the High Plains, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959).
2. Frank G. Roe, The Indian and the Horse (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955).  
Francis Haines, Horses in America, (N.Y.: Crowell, 1971), pp. 54-54.
3. Joseph Jablow, The Cheyenne in Plains Indian Trade Relations, 1795-1840, (University of Washington, Seattle: American Ethnological Society, reprint, 1966), pp. 1-24.
4. Frank R. Secoy, Changing Military Patterns on the Great Plains, (Locust Valley, N.Y.: American Ethnological Society, 1953).
5. Hyde, op.cit.
6. Notes in our files by Joseph Medicine Crow (anthropologist and chairman, Crow Tribal Cultural Comm.).  
Virginia C. Trenholm, The Arapahoes, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970), pp. 3-32.  
Regina Flannery, The Gros Ventres of Montana, Part I., Social Life, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1953), pp. ix-13.
7. Hyde, op.cit.
8. Flannery, op.cit.
9. George Hyde, Red Cloud's Folk, (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1935).
10. Presten V. Holden, The Horse and the Hoe on the Plains.
11. Jablow, op.cit.
12. Frank G. Roe, The North American Buffalo, (Torente: 1955).



IV. THE FUR TRADE ERA, 1812 - 1842.



## THE CONTEXT OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN FUR TRADE

Most of the major publications on the fur trade period in the country west of the Missouri River tend to emphasize the colorful personalities that seemed attracted to the business, or the harrowing adventures that stand out against a background of hard work, standing in icy streams for hours on end, scraping bits of flesh from hides, building cabins, and endless days of packing. Even standard works on the regional fur trade as a whole are deficient in their appraisal of the place the Rocky Mountain, Southwestern and Pacific Northwest fur trade activities held in the continental and worldwide movement of furs.<sup>1</sup>

It seems critically important to establish the outlines of this context so that the reader may come to understand the effects of the trade upon the region, and much of the internal detail of the fast-changing business that dominated the economic activity of the country surrounding our Study Area for a period of forty years.

Beginning with the very earliest explorer contacts with the northeast coast of North America, furs were the currency with which the Indian bought a great part of the European manufactured goods that rapidly came to play an essential part in his life. The most productive fur regions were the forests around the Great Lakes and those that extended off into Canada toward Hudson's Bay. Most furs moved to market through Montreal.<sup>2</sup>

The conquest of Canada by British and Colonial forces during the Seven Years (or "French & Indian") War only strengthened the importance of the Montreal fur markets. Military activity during the American Revolution intermittently interfered with the trade. In 1785 most North American furs moved through Montreal to London. Beaver was, numerically and financially the most important single type of fur involved in this trade, amounting to 150,000 hides, worth about \$5 per pound.<sup>3</sup>

About half the beaver pelts were marketed as hides, and the rest destined for utilization in the manufacture of felt, primarily felt hats.

A great part of the fur supply moved from London to other commercial centers on the European continent. Here it competed with fur from Russia and the Scandinavian countries. During the mercantilist era in the economic history of Europe; a great deal of trade went on by various channels even in time of war, so fur marketing had developed into a fairly smooth-working business by the end of the American Revolution.<sup>4</sup>

Suddenly, western Europe was thrown into a new kind of turmoil by the French Revolution. Paris had been one of the main marketing/manufacturing centers for fur and felt on the continent. Drastic changes in French economy broke up the old trading patterns. Warfare with Britain and other powers interrupted trade with the continent to an unprecedented degree. Fur prices crashed to \$2.00 per pound for beaver by 1797.<sup>5</sup>

Felt-makers in this same period began to develop new processes that let them use other furs as a source of raw material. The most important of these was racoon, abundant in the older fur trade country, adaptive to the settled regions of the east, and costing only a few cents a pound. By 1800, nearly half the world's felt was made from racoon fur.<sup>6</sup>

Larger hides, for the making of leather became more important, as time went on, and, again by 1800, deer hides were the most important in numbers of animal hides on the market.<sup>7</sup>

In 1785, the Chinese closed their frontier to Russian traders. Over the next 15 years, American merchants gained a foothold in the China trade, and furs from the Great Lakes country of both the U.S. and Canada began to move through New York on their way to Chinese markets. It was this China trade that made the development of western fur resources potentially attractive to the fur companies.<sup>8</sup> In the years 1785-1800, fur traders pushed their explorations steadily westward across Canada through the most productive of Western fur country. They began to look southward to evaluate new resources at the same period that traders operating up the Missouri River became interested in the country to the west.<sup>9</sup>

Only the most expensive furs could stand the costs of transportation for themselves and the trade goods that bought them in the West, hence in the opening years of the Rocky Mountain trade, the main interest lay in beaver and valuable small furs.<sup>10</sup>

Canadian traders made a contact with the Mandan and Arikara Indians in the period 1739-1743. By this time the earthlodge villages of those tribes were already major regional centers for a substantial intertribal trade on the Plains. They soon became bases of operations for the exploration of the region.<sup>11</sup>

### FUR TRADE PERIOD EXPLORATION

First of the fur-trade period explorers of the northern plains country southwest of the Missouri were the brothers Francois and Louis-Joseph, sons of Pierre Gaultier deVerrennes de la Verendrye who had already attained some fame in the exploration of the Canadian prairie country.

In 1742 they set out from the Mandan villages of present North Dakota with the goal of finding a route to "The Western Sea." Their precise route has been the subject of speculation and controversy for nearly a hundred years. They may have set foot in the study area and they may not, and we shall probably never know for sure. They may have only reached a point in southeastern Montana from which they could see the Big Horns in the distance.<sup>12</sup> And the mountains they mention may only have been the rough breaks of Southern Montana west of Powder River, of which a subsequent explorer said that here his party

.....found a large number of shells of the variety Cornu ammonys, called by someone "Snake Shell" like a kind of bright stone lying on the surface of the soil. Apparently they were carried by the waters of the rain which dissolved the soil in the neighborhood. They are of various sizes and shapes. They have the clearness and the lustre of a painting in water-colors and reflect with as much strength as a mirror of the same dimensions. It is certainly these stones which have merited for this mountain the name of "Shining Mountains."<sup>13</sup>

At any rate, we are not at this point convinced that the Verendrye party can be credited with the first exploration of the district under study here.<sup>14</sup>

Jean Valle is reported to have visited the Black Hills in 1803 but left no precise account of his movements.<sup>15</sup>

The first writer to record his impressions of a specific portion of our Study Area was Charles LeRaye, who visited it in company with a trader and a small band of Hidatsa Indians late in the summer of 1802. They entered what is now Wyoming on Tongue River on August 25th of that year. The party camped along Goose Creek until September 12th, when they moved on up Little Goose Creek to about the vicinity of present Big Horn where they stayed until September 24th when they moved out of the area to the northwest along the foot of the Big Horns.<sup>16</sup>

Next in the record of visits to the area is that of Francois Antoine Larocque in the summer of 1805. Larocque and his small party attached themselves to a sizeable band of Crow Indians at the Hidatsa villages on



the Missouri River and crossed southern Montana to Powder River. Moving up that stream early in August, Larocque saw the Big Horns through his telescope on August 4th (four days after his passage along the "Shining Mountains" mentioned above).

The Larocque party moved up the Powder into Wyoming, cut across a divide to reach Piney Creek not far from its confluence with the Clear Fork of Powder River, and followed the Piney's north bank up to the foot of the mountains to camp just below present Story, on August 8, 1805. They remained there until August 13th when they moved to about the present location of Big Horn. On the 14th they moved northwest to Big Goose Creek, probably in the vicinity of Beckton Stock Farm. On the 16th they moved to

.....Tongue River where we arrived at one o'clock in the afternoon. We crossed it at the ford and camped on the north side.

This camp probably lay near present Dayton, Wyoming. They stayed there until the 18th and by noon of that day were on a tributary of the Little Horn, probably Pass Creek, moving out of Wyoming. After spending some more time with the Crows, Larocque and his men left the region by traveling down the Yellowstone.<sup>17</sup>

The next party of record to traverse the area was the group of westbound Astorians led by Wilson Price Hunt. Bound for the Pacific Coast, this party of 62 men, one woman and two children hiked out of the Arikara villages, leading their pack horses on July 18, 1811. Moving as fast as possible considering their shortage of horses, they made contact with a Cheyenne camp in Dakota and secured three dozen saddle animals. This did not increase their speed notably, but at least they could take turns riding.

It would appear from their journal that Hunt's party entered Wyoming along the divide between the Powder and the Little Missouri and followed that divide for some distance to the southwest. Crossing Powder River, they reached Clear Fork on August 25th, and followed it to the foot of the Big Horns, where they found a camp of Crow Indians. From these Indians they bought some additional horses.

Leaving the Crow camp, the party worked along the front of the mountains to the south of Clear Fork, retracing their steps at least once in an effort to find a good mountain trail. Finally they succeeded in ascending the north fork of Crazy Woman Creek. In the mountains here, they



paid off troublesome Edward Rose, ex-river pirate, who joined a band of Crows to become one of the first of the "mountain men."

Hunt's party soon after exited the Study Area to the southwest.<sup>18</sup>

The Astorian venture soon brought another, and more influential party into Wyoming. This little band of seven men, led by Robert Stuart found their way across the Continental Divide in the vicinity of South Pass in the fall of 1812. Descending the Sweetwater, they entered the present Casper District late in October. Moving on down to the North Platte, they selected a site for a projected winter camp near the lower end of Bessemer Bend on November 1st, 1812. They described the site as "in a beautiful low point of Cottonwoods, surrounded with a thick growth of common willow;" and they hoped to spend the winter "living in peace and quiet, without being honored with the intrusive visits of our savage neighbors..."

They sent out a hunting party that killed 32 buffalo, and spent several days bringing the meat to their camp site.

Then they set about building their cabin, 8 x 18 feet, with side walls 6 feet high.

This crude log cabin covered with hides was the first structure known to have been built by white men in what is now Wyoming. When the men were not yet fully settled, visiting Arapaho horse-raiders en route to strike the Crows, alerted them to the fact that their camp site lay near a virtual crossroads of such activity. Leaving the cabin on December 13th, 1812, they marched on the Platte to a point not far southeast of Torrington, built another crude shelter and waited out the worst of the winter.<sup>19</sup>

Nothing of really historic importance happened to the Stuart party while they were in Wyoming that winter, but their journey itself had a chain of effects that have not yet fully ceased! Stuart's reports of an easy-gradient route across the dreaded Rockies stood out in marked contrast to Lewis and Clark's account of their crossings of the mountains in Montana. Fur traders developed the route into a regular highway of western commerce, and ultimately as we shall see below, it became for many years the main route of westward emigration and a key link in transcontinental communications.

During the period 1806-1812 most other fur trade activity on the margins of the region was concentrated on the Missouri and on the Yellowstone, with limited access into northwestern Wyoming by that route.<sup>20</sup> The War of 1812 interrupted the western trade to some degree, but the events of greatest importance were centered around the climactic years leading up to Napoleon's final defeat. Once this occurred, Europeans began to patch up the machinery of commerce and adapt it to a noticeably altered political and social structure. In such a period of adjustment it should not be surprising that there was little temptation to invest in new trading schemes on the far away margin of the fur country.<sup>21</sup> Finally, in the early 1820's the western trade began to attract a new set of entrepreneurs.

Initially, the man who had the most influence on events in Wyoming was William Henry Ashley, a St. Louis merchant. Noting the earlier failures to establish an efficient fur-harvesting scheme in the region, Ashley concluded to concentrate on the use of American trappers working the country. There would be trade with the Indians, of course, but the trappers recruited from the Missouri frontier were to form the dependable core of the organization set up by Ashley and his partner Alexander Henry.

In the spring of 1822, Henry took a group of trappers to the mouth of the Yellowstone, where they fanned out through the Upper Missouri and Yellowstone country to explore the land and evaluate its fur-production potential.<sup>22</sup>

In 1823, Ashley took a second and larger group up the Missouri. Conflict with the Arikara Indians on the way up the river, coupled with Henry's troubles with the Blackfeet on the Upper Missouri led them to explore overland routes to the Rockies.<sup>23</sup> During September of that year, Jedidiah Smith led a party of the Ashley-Henry men out of Fort Kiowa on the Missouri up White River. They passed south of the Black Hills, crossed the upper Cheyenne River country, and trapped their first beaver on Powder River.

The Smith party then traveled down Powder River to its mouth. After a meeting with Henry on the Yellowstone, they came back up the Powder some distance, cut across to the Tongue and followed it to the Big Horns. They crossed the Big Horns on "The Old Crow Trail," which we believe may be the trail up the ridges between Amsden Creek and Tongue River Canyon,

well known in later times and still in local use today.<sup>24</sup>

While Smith was crossing the Big Horns, Captain John H. Weber along with Jim Bridger and others trapped the country along the Powder. These two parties were the first active trappers to work through the heart of the Study Area. All of these men wintered on the Wind River among camps of friendly Crows that year.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the trip by Smith up White River in 1823, and trip out down the North Platte with furs in 1824 the fact that Ashley himself brought parties up the South Platte and into western Wyoming via what would later become known as the Overland route through the Laramie Plains in 1825, Ashley took his furs out that latter year by a route that passed down the Big Horn by way of "Bad Pass" on the west side of Big Horn Canyon to descend the river by bullboat.

At first Ashley was determined to utilize the Missouri and the Yellowstone for access to the fur country in much the same manner that Manuel Lisa had tried to do before the War of 1812. He spent a great deal of time and effort in trying to develop that route, which is not really surprising considering that he and his associates lived in a town that lay at the center of a vast region where water transportation was the key to the economical movement of goods and people.<sup>26</sup>

That autumn, Jedidiah Smith took the first fur-trade pack train west from St. Louis and up the North Platte and Sweetwater to re-supply the trappers who were wintering in the mountains. Henceforth trapper pack trains moved regularly over this route.<sup>27</sup> In 1827, Ashley took a small cannon on a wheeled carriage over the trail to the rendezvous.

William Sublette took a train of ten large freight wagons and two dearborn carriages through the region to the 1830 rendezvous on the Popo Agie, proving the feasibility of the route for freight traffic.<sup>28</sup>

A number of parties of trappers worked the Powder River country in the early 1830's, but until 1834 they did not usually winter there.<sup>29</sup>

These American commercial ventures in the Rocky Mountain west derived an initial advantage from the fact that they started when older and depressed world markets were still upset by the Napoleonic Wars, by the exclusion of Russians from the trade with China, and by a highly competitive edge in far eastern shipping built up by American merchantmen during the Napoleonic Wars.<sup>30</sup> Even with these competitive advantages, the supply lines were long, British manufactured goods, the standard of

the Indian trade, were high priced, and credit was always very expensive. The "mountain man" and rendezvous system worked reasonably well for about ten years. Glorifying in personal freedom and movement where they wished, the "mountain men" were none-the-less closely linked economically to the system. Almost all of them either trapped on shares, or paid a high price for all they brought from the company traders at the rendezvous. Part of this high price derived from the fact that they nearly always ended the rendezvous in debt for their next year's supplies and outfit.<sup>31</sup> The company traders in turn were financed on notes by suppliers. The best of the company traders ultimately succeeded to the supplier position (as with Ashley and with Sublette and Campbell). The suppliers were involved in this as one activity in a broad range of frontier promotional activities such as local banking, real estate speculation, wholesale and retail merchandising, and it is difficult from studies available today to isolate their real profits from the trade. Many of them operated on credit from eastern bankers and factors.<sup>32</sup>

By the early 1830's the fur business in the West was entering a new phase. Intensive trapping proved the fact that total productivity of the region in high-value furs was really relatively low. Modern studies of beaver-stream productivity indicate that in a climax situation, a good stream will yield about three beaver to the mile. With this kind of dispersion, it took a lot of labor under the best of conditions to bring in enough to keep a trapper supplied through a winter, even considering the minimal survival needs of the mountain-man!<sup>33</sup>

The year 1832 saw several changes in the trading situation. Sublette took a major caravan to the rendezvous, and their march was trailed by an "amateur" traders caravan led by New Englander Nathaniel Wyeth. This column crossed South Pass, through the Green River country and through Hoback Canyon to Jackson Hole, thence over Teton Pass to Pierre's Hole. Another caravan came in from Fort Union for the American Fur Company. This rendezvous was also enlivened by a major fight between the trappers and their Indian allies and one of the wandering Atsina bands. As additional leavening, Sublette had brought along 450 gallons of straight grain alcohol "for the use of his boatmen." Rum in the modest quantities the mountain men could afford was a regular feature of the rendezvous going back to 1826, but this appears to be the first really wholesale distribution of the makings of trade-whiskey this far into the mountains.



It was not to be the last!<sup>34</sup>

Trading activity at the fur-trader rendezvous of the late 1820's demonstrated the demand side of the market for trade-goods among the Indians of the region. Perhaps this opportunity for trade could support part of the overhead for the trade as a whole. Almost simultaneously, a number of the fur trading partnerships hit upon the same answer: to build trading forts in the heart of the Indian country along fairly reliable routes. From almost the first, the main staple trade item became the Indian-tanned buffalo robe. Robes are bulky, heavy objects that take up a lot of storage space. So do the many kinds of relatively low-cost hardware that the Indians were willing to buy now that they had an abundance of horses with which to transport their camp equipment. So, the forts had to be sizeable affairs, patterned after the major trading posts on the western navigable rivers.

These forts then, too, could serve as bases of operations for the trappers who worked a given region.<sup>35</sup>

In 1834, two such forts were built within the Study Area. The first was Fort William on the Laramie River, about a mile upstream from its confluence with the North Platte. Here, the partnership of Sublette and Campbell built a log stockaded post roughly a hundred feet square.<sup>36</sup> The other post was built on Powder River, east of Kaycee by Antonio Montero, apparently an employee or business associate of Captain B.L.E. Bonneville.

No visual record of the exact appearance of Montero's "Portugese Houses" is known to exist, but physical evidence on the ground reveals the size and layout fairly precisely, since this site has not since suffered any important disturbance.<sup>37</sup>

Fort William is very well documented. Paintings and sketches of this post by this artist Alfred Jacob Miller are so well known as to virtually form the stereotype western fort for most Americans and for many in other parts of the world. Unfortunately its site was destroyed by land-leveling activities in the late 1930's (thereby enhancing the historical and archaeological potential of such a site as Montero's "Portugese Houses").<sup>38</sup>

The Fort William location proved to be the better of the two and a succession of volatile partnerships operated here. The site lay low along the Laramie, and may have been endangered by flooding or even more likely by the rotting off of its cottonwood pickets. In 1841, the "American Fur Company" built a replacement post, Fort John, about a mile to the southwest

on a firm gravel terrace well above flood level. The new post was built of adobe by Mexican workmen brought from Taos for the purpose.<sup>39</sup> It continued in use until 1849, when its then owners Pierre Choteau, Jr. and Company, sold it to the Army.<sup>40</sup>

The period 1834-1841 was one in which virtually every mountain man able to obtain credit entered into some kind of trading partnership, often short-lived. Credit remained a problem. Interest was high. Disaster could wipe out a group's investment in short order. It was a period when fragmentation rather than consolidation became the pattern of business activity.

Part of this situation developed from the fact that while the main partnerships, such as the American Fur Company and its successors, Pierre Choteau, Jr. and Company had a fair financial standing, they also had high overhead and a long supply line out of St. Louis. The Plains Indians offered an increasing market for trade alcohol. They also wanted blankets and other home-manufactured items that could be had in New Mexico.<sup>41</sup>

Small-scale traders like John Richard found that they could improve their competitive position by bringing loads of "Taos Lightning" and other goods from New Mexico, a shorter haul by wagons or pack trains than that from St. Louis.<sup>42</sup>

At first the competitors built fortified trading posts, such as "Fort Bernard" a few miles down the Platte from the Laramie. Lancaster P. Lupton built Fort Platte only two miles from Fort John.<sup>43</sup>

Actually, for most of their occupancy, Fort William and Fort John were known simply as "Fort Laramie" from their location. These posts handled fewer and fewer beaver, but marketed considerable quantities of buffalo robes and other miscellaneous hides and furs.

The early 1840's saw another significant change in the world-wide fur trade. In the Anglo-Chinese War of 1839-42, (often called the Opium War), Britain forced the Chinese to open trade to them at a series of "treaty ports." In subsequent diplomatic moves, the U.S. was able to secure "most favored nation" equality in a new treaty of its own with China. But the Chinese also extended this equality to other powers for trade at and through the treaty ports.

Overall, the effect of the new treaties and new Chinese policies was beneficial to the volume of U.S. trade with China. But selectively there could be problems. The U.S. found difficult competition in furs

from British traders operating on the more reliable supply lines and more easily harvested fur resources of Canada, and also from renewed competition from Russian furs, for this was the great period of Russian trader activity throughout the fur regions of northeast Asia, as well as a period in which Russia controlled the marketing of furs from Alaska. All of this tightened the cost-price squeeze on furs from the Rocky Mountain west.<sup>44</sup>

World-wide, the fur trade remained important, but the Rocky Mountains of the U.S. were not destined for a very significant role in that trade. From start to finish as a really important economic activity in the west, the fur trade might be thought of as a business that offered a continual cost-price squeeze in a region on the margins of economical productivity. But it did have a significant long-term effect on the region.

First, it drastically altered the life of the Indian. In a little more than a generation, flint-working disappeared as steel knives and needles, awls and files and arrow points became available in trade. The I. Wilson knife, the Barnett trade-musket, and a wealth of smaller items became necessities to the Indian. He also became increasingly dependent on liquor and on trade tobacco and on purchased food items like coffee, sugar and flour. An Indian woman could process about 20 good head-and-tail-tanned robes a year alongside her other duties. Hunting activity became more commercial, more Indians moved into the buffalo country, more than offsetting losses of population in the small pox epidemics that periodically swept the region. The intensity of intertribal conflict increased as more Indians crowded in to harvest the buffalo. When west-bound emigrants began to come through the country they passed through a volatile population.<sup>45</sup>

Then, the fur trade gave a large number of men the opportunity to learn the details of western topography and resources intimately. It furnished the generation of guides and interpreters that influenced successive stages of exploration, emigration and military operations clear down to the closing of the frontier.

By the 1840's many of the small traders were closely allied to particular bands of Indians through marriage. They felt secure enough to go off into the country periodically and trade from their wagons, though the risks were always high. When emigrant traffic sprang up along the main trails through the region, these same men pushed out along the trails and built small trading posts to deal with both the Indian and the travelers on the trails

There was a virtual chain of these posts in the 1850's extending up the Platte Valley through our Study Area, and we will discuss them in greater detail in connection with our coverage of the trails, below. But it is important to recognize that the "fur trade" did not end abruptly. It was a business fraught with deep rooted economic problems long before the first traders reached the region under study. The classic "beaver trade" had passed out of the picture as a significant business in the west a good ten years before the machinery for making the silk hat was patented! What did happen was that in response to changing conditions, the nature of the trade and the structure of the business firms engaged in it changed almost continuously. That change continued on through successive stages of development with the roadside store of ranching days and the reservation trader store of recent times as the end products of two of these lines of development!<sup>46</sup>



#### NOTES ON PART IV

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Hiram M. Chittenden, The American Fur Trade of the Far West, (N.Y., Barnes and Noble, 1935).
2. *ibid.*, also: Aspects of the Fur Trade, (Papers from the Fur Trade Conference), (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1966).
3. Phillips, *op.cit.*
4. *ibid.*
5. *ibid.*, also see note 2.
6. Andrew Ure, Dictionary of Arts, Manufactures and Mines, (London, N.Y.: 1844).
7. See note 2.
8. Phillips, *op.cit.*
9. Morton, Arthur S., A History of the Canadian West to 1871, (N.Y.: 1939).
10. John Sunder, The Fur Trade on the Upper Missouri..., (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963).
11. A.P. Nasatir, Before Lewis & Clark, (2 Vols.), (St. Louis,: St. Louis Historical Documents Foundation, 1952).
12. There is a wealth of analytical and controversial literature on the movements of the Verendrye party. Some of the more interesting items are:  
Nellis M. Crouse, La Verendrye, Fur Trader and Explorer, (Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1956).  
Charles E. DeLand, "The Verendrye Explorations and Discoveries," South Dakota Historical Collections, Vol. VII (1914), pp. 99-402.  
Charles E. DeLand, "Additional Verendrye Material," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, Vol. III, (1916-1917), pp. 378-386.  
We have discussed this expedition at some length with Dr. T.A. Larson of the University of Wyoming, who is the only person I have talked to personally who has seen and translated the Verendrye journals for his own satisfaction.
13. Francois Antoine Larocque, (Ruth Hazlitt, tr. & ed.), "The Journal of Francois Antoine Larocque, from the Assiniboine River to the Yellowstone -- 1805," Sources of Northwest History, Number 20 (1934).
14. Dr. Larson seems inclined to think the party wintered north of the Black Hills and may have reached the foot of the Big Horns in their detached reconaissance away from their wintering village.
15. Leonard Jennewein, Black Hills Booktrails.
16. For most convenient data on the LeRaye journal, see: Robert A. Murray, "First Tracks in the Big Horns," Montana, the Magazine of Western History, Vol. XXVI, No. 1, January 1976, pp. 2-13, and a following exchange of letters by Dr. T.A. Larson and by Murray, in the Spring, 1976 issue of the same journal.

17. LaRocque, op.cit.
18. "Journey of Mr. Hunt and His Companions from Saint Louis to the Mouth of the Columbia by a New Route Across the Rocky Mountains," Appendix A., Phillip Ashton Rollins Discovery of the Oregon Trail, (Scribners, N.Y., 1935).
19. Robert Stuart, On the Oregon Trail, Robert Stuart's Journal of Discovery (1812-1813), Kenneth Spaulding, ed., (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953).
20. R.E. Oglesby, Manuel Lisa and the Opening of the Missouri Fur Trade, (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1963).
21. ibid., also:  
James L. Clayton "The Growth and Economic Significance of the American Fur Trade, 1790-1890," Aspects of the Fur Trade, (Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, 1967).
22. Dale L. Morgan, The West of William H. Ashley... (Denver: Old West Publishing Co., 1964).
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24. Dale L. Morgan, Jedidiah Smith and the Opening of the West, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967), pp. 26-41.
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28. John E. Sunder, Bill Sublette, Mountain Man, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959), pp. 48-49.
29. Edwin C. Bearss, Big Horn Canyon Basic History Data Study, (2 Vols.), (limited Itek ed. by National Park Service, Denver, 1972), gives the best synthesis in one place of the comings and goings of these parties.
30. Robert A. Murray, "Fur Trade of the Fort Laramie Region," in: Ft. Laramie, Visions of a Grand Old Post, (Ft. Collins, Colorado: Old Army Press, 1974).
31. Sunder, op.cit.
32. ibid.
33. Cecil J. Alter, Jim Bridger (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), pp. 25-50, citing Utah Fish and Game Commission Studies.
34. Sunder, op.cit.
35. Some of the best material on the major trading forts of the immediate region will be found in: LeRoy R. Hafen and Francis M. Young, Fort Laramie and the Pageant of the West, (Glendale: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1939).
36. ibid.  
We have in our own files photographic evidence and interview data which fits together to provide a fairly precise location for Fort William, a site destroyed by landleveling activities in the 1938-40 period.
37. Edgely W. Todd, "Antonio Montero," in Mountain Men and the Fur Trade, (9 Vols.), (Glendale: Arthur H. Clark Co., 196 - ).

also: Notes by Eugene Galloway on a surface examination of the Portuguese House site, c. 1965-68, and aerial photographs of the site by Western Interpretive Services, 1974. Latter photos were taken under optimum blown-snow conditions to provide stockade building outlines. Originals in WIS files, partial coverage in materials submitted with our technical report (229 pp.) on the Powder Coal Basin EIS Study Area.

38. see note 36, above.
39. Hafen & Young, op.cit.
40. ibid.
41. see: Sunder, op.cit., and also David Lavender, Bent's Old Fort, (N.Y., Doubleday, ), and Robert A. Murray, Citadel on the Santa Fe Trail, (Bellevue, Nebraska. Old Army Press, 1970).
42. notes on a multitude of Richard sources in the WIS files.
43. Hafen & Young, op.cit.
44. Clayton, op.cit. & Phillips, op.cit.
45. Most of the anthropological studies on material culture on these tribes detail the changes in that aspect of their lives, Lavender gives an outstanding descriptive synthesis of the process, and Hyde's several works are also useful.
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PART V  
ACQUISITION, EMIGRATION, TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION  
AND  
EARLY MILITARY HISTORY, 1842 - 1862



## ACQUISITION AND JURISDICTION

The Study Area lies in a region with a complex history of territorial jurisdiction. In the earliest period of territorial claims this was fairly academic, with the British colonies on the east coast, the Spanish on the West Coast and in the Southwest, both Britain and Spain in the Northwest and France on the lower Mississippi maintaining extensive and overlapping claims. By the time of the Astorians' return trip across the area in 1812, however, claims were better defined.

Portions of the Study Area west of 106 degrees and 15 minutes and south of the 42nd Parallel were Spanish territory until the Mexican revolution of 1821, when they became part of Mexico. That part of the Mexican territory east of 107 degrees and 30 minutes became part of the Republic of Texas in 1836, and remained in that ownership until the annexation of Texas in 1845.

East of 106 degrees and 15 minutes and north of the 42nd parallel, and east of the Continental Divide north of 42 degrees lay French territory (owned intermittently by Spain through the vagaries of Napoleonic politics). This land, "Louisiana" was purchased by the United States from France in 1803.

The country acquired in the Louisiana Purchase was an unorganized territory until 1812. From 1812 until 1854 it was part of the Missouri Territory, as were the lands in the study area acquired from Texas after 1845. From 1854-1863, this tract lay in Nebraska Territory, and from 1863-1868 in Dakota.

The Mexican lands west of the Texas segment were ceded to the U.S. in 1848. This tract was part of Utah Territory from 1850 until 1863, and part of Idaho Territory in 1863-1868.

After this complex territorial history, the land all became part of Wyoming Territory in 1868, and so it remained when Wyoming became a state in the year 1890.<sup>1</sup>



## COUNTY STRUCTURES

During the period when our Wyoming Study Area was a part of Dakota Territory, there was initially little demand for internal local government. The coming of the Union Pacific Railroad in 1867 changed all that. On September 27, 1867, about six weeks after the initial steps toward organization of the City of Cheyenne, another mass meeting in that town started the process of formally organizing Laramie County, Dakota Territory, which had been authorized by the Dakota Legislature in January of that year to include all of what is now Wyoming. During January of 1868, the Dakota Legislature divided the area into two parts, with the eastern portion (including all our present Study Area) remaining as Laramie County, and the western portion becoming Carter County.

On July 25, 1868, President Andrew Johnson signed the organic act for Wyoming Territory with its present boundaries. The Senate, however, failed to act upon Johnson's appointments for territorial officials, and so the territorial government could not be organized until the new president and new congress were in action the following spring. On May 10th, the new territorial government set up shop in Cheyenne.

At the outset, the new territory was divided into four counties, extending in broad strips the full north-south distance of the territory and having county seats strung along the Union Pacific Railroad. Our present Study Area comprised the northern back-country of three of those counties: Laramie, with its county seat in Cheyenne, Albany, with its county seat in Laramie City, and Carbon, with its county seat in Rawlins.<sup>2</sup>

Much of the Study Area was affected when the 1876 session of the Territorial Legislature cut off the northern portion of the original counties to create Crook County and Pease County.<sup>3</sup> Pease County was never formally organized, through lack of sufficient population, but Crook County was organized on January 22, 1885, with its county seat at Sundance.<sup>4</sup>

The northern part of unorganized Pease County was cut off in 1880, and organized on March 20, 1881 as Johnson County.<sup>5</sup>

In 1888, the legislature created three new counties within the Study Area. The northern part of then Carbon County was cut off to form Natrona County, with substantially its present boundaries. The northern part of Johnson County was taken to form Sheridan County. Converse County was created out of the area of Albany and Laramie Counties comprising present Converse and Niobrara Counties.<sup>6</sup>

These were the last county changes prior to statehood in 1890.

Finally in 1911 in an extensive reorganization of county boundaries resulted from action of the Wyoming State Legislature. At this time Weston, Niobrara, Goshen and Platte and Campbell counties were created with their present boundaries, thus completing the geographic organization of local governments in their present pattern.<sup>7</sup>



EMIGRATION TO THE FAR WEST



As colorful as the fur traders and their "mountain men" were, their period had little immediate and direct affect on the study area. They came and went through this convenient corridor of travel with minimum fuss, and the several rendezvous near the mouth of the Popo Agie were their nearest major camp sites. Their greatest importance lies in the knowledge that they gained of the western country.

Long before any official "exploring" parties of the government penetrated the region, various of the "mountain men" learned virtually all of the good routes of travel and the opportunities and constraints of each. This knowledge they put to good use, for:

Out of this school of trappers arose the leaders for subsequent enterprises.<sup>8</sup>

William Henry Ashley and others publicized the feasibility of wagon travel through the South Pass route. In the same period, visionary Hall J. Kelley attempted at considerable time and expense, to promote an overland emigration to the Pacific.

The country was not quite ready for this in the late 1820's, however, for much land immediately adjacent the existing frontier in the Ohio Valley remained to be settled.

Historian Dale Van Every provides perhaps the best synthesis of the development and movement of the specialized "frontier people" from the eastern foot of the Appalachians to the far west. From 1841 through 1848, most emigration to the valleys of the Pacific Coast was very much a movement of this same kind of settlers.

Advocates of "Manifest Destiny" promoted this movement. Veterans of the fur trade stimulated it by publicizing in the country and the routes to it. News of missionary activity in the Pacific Northwest helped arouse further interest in the region. Never-the-less it appears that the main single factor which set the "frontier people" in motion was the increasing pressure of settlement on the western fringes of the woodland frontier of the midwest.

Settlers of Indiana, Illinois and Missouri all came ultimately to the edge of the wooded country and faced the tall-grass prairie ahead. Their whole technology and society were built around intensive exploitation of a woodland ecosystem. Nearly a generation of adjustment, experimentation and development of new ideas would be required before they would begin to really settle on the prairie.

Out in the Pacific Northwest, however, and in the foothills of northern California, lay another if detached, woodland frontier.<sup>9</sup>

Under the 1818 treaty, the Oregon Country was a region of joint occupancy, open to settlers from either Britain or the United States. Most British residents in 1840 were Hudson's Bay Company men or affiliates, not particularly favoring other settlement. The missionaries who came in the late 1830's were Americans, and not at all adverse to the coming of more of their own people. Marcus Whitman, for one, widely and openly advocated such settlement.

The Bidwell-Bartleson party combined groups that wished to go to the far west. They traveled through the Study Area together and later at Fort Hall, divided to go to Oregon and to California, in 1841. Others followed.

At first the Oregon emigration was the larger. Around a hundred persons went out in 1842. In 1843, over a hundred emigrant wagons went to Oregon, in 1844 about 160 made the trip, and 1845 over 300 wagons arrived in the Willamette Valley. At a reported average of ten persons per wagon, this swelled the Oregon population of American settlers by over 1800 emigrants by the fall of 1845.

Lt. John C. Fremont "explored" the well-known trail as far as South Pass in 1842. The next year the government rushed his report along with that of naval Lt. Charles Wilkes (who had come inland to Walla Walla from the coast) to print in order to publicize the region and the route. The next year Fremont led another party that mapped the whole route to Oregon. His widely circulated reports were soon joined by a large number of published "guide books" to the major western trails.

Marcus Whitman's mission station at Waiilatpu on the Walla Walla River quickly became one of the major emigrant stopping points, much to Whitman's satisfaction, and he said in a personal letter in 1844:

As I hold the settlement of this country by Americans rather than by an English Colony most important, I am happy to have been the means of landing so large an emigration on the shores of the Columbia, with their wagons, families and stock, all in safety.<sup>10</sup>

The tide of emigration continued to rise. By 1847, an estimated 4500 persons went to California. Additionally, the first advance party of Mormons went over the trail to find a place to settle in Utah. Virtually all of these emigrants used trails through the Study Area. In just six years this route changed from a fur traders' trail to the main avenue of westward expansion.



The discovery of gold in California in 1848 turned a frontier fever into a national epidemic of "going west." 1849 saw about 25,000 persons pass over the trail to California alone. In 1850 the number doubled, and for several years the annual movement of people through the Study Area exceeded 50,000. Some of the California gold rush traffic went by sea. A trickle went over the southern desert trails. But over half of the total travel to California went through South Pass.

In two years time (1846-48), the U.S. obtained title to Oregon, California and the Southwest. With this vast addition to the nation's territory, the significance of an easy gradient route to the Pacific multiplied.

The gold rush traffic changed the overall character of the emigration from one of skilled frontiersmen to one that held representatives of virtually every component of our population as well as large numbers of new arrivals from foreign lands.<sup>11</sup>

From the sparse documentation of the fur trade years, historians also find a dramatic change. Diaries and journals kept by emigrants provide an abundant record of the day-to-day course of many different parties on the trail. Reminiscent accounts add to the total information available. Each year a few more such accounts are unearthed and published. Many more lie unpublished (in many cases because they are only sparse itineraries) but accessible to the scholar. Writing in the 1960's veteran historian Merrill J. Mattes listed over 800 such accounts. Some of these cover parties that branched off to take the road to Colorado in 1859-60, some are accounts of travel that turned off toward Montana, some took the "Cherokee" or "Overland" route after 1857, but many deal with parties that traveled through South Pass. Mattes confines his own examination of their accounts to the portion of their travel east of Fort Laramie.<sup>12</sup>

From 1841 through 1856, the story of the study area is almost entirely an emigrant story, and activity is confined to a fairly narrow belt along the trails.

Both the generalized and the day-to-day life of the emigrants along the main trails to the west have been so copiously reported in print that it seems unwise to dwell at length on this aspect of the migration in a paper of this extent. Most parties traveled under an elected leadership. Some of the early parties employed a guide. Within a few years the deep-rutted trails pointed the way and eliminated the need for such services.

Practically all of the emigrant traffic to the far west entered our Study Area from present Nebraska along either the north or the south side of the North Platte River Valley. Reaching the mouth of the Laramie, part of the south side traffic crossed the Laramie. In the high water season ferries and soon a toll bridge served the traffic across that small stream. Through most of the year wagons could ford the Laramie without incident.

Some north side traffic crossed here to rest and refit at the Fort. This and the south side traffic generally moved out of the Fort to the northwest and remained on the south side of the river until they reached some point in the vicinity of present Casper.

Most traffic that had moved for some distance along the north side of the North Platte tended to stay on that side to avoid crossing and recrossing the stream, which could be quite formidable through about four months or more of the best travel season. The northside traffic found much rougher terrain on their trails, and some of them after the experiment was over way, sought another river crossing at some point such as the mouth of Sawmill Canyon or several other such places.

Extensive research and field investigations by veteran trails-historian Paul Henderson and others have pinpointed virtually all the main western emigrant trails along the North Platte Corridor, as well as those to and up the Sweetwater out of our present Study Area. The BLM has in its files copies of the Henderson maps of these trail variants and it appears unnecessary to dwell at length on them here.

From 1841 to 1859, certainly the bulk of emigration to the far west and to Utah took this North Platte/Sweetwater corridor. The differing personal route preferences cited above resulted in the development of an interbraided system of trails in a strip from five to 25 miles wide.<sup>13</sup>

### TRADERS ALONG THE TRAILS

As we indicated in the chapter on the fur trade period, there was an intensive small-scale retail trade with the Indians along the North Platte Valley at the very outset of the period of westward emigration. These traders welcomed the immediate opportunities to improve their trade that the opening of emigration promised. While there continued to be an ever changing pattern of minor posts, wintering-houses and tent-camp summer trading posts, some of the old fur trading forts and major trading posts developed into regular and well-known outfitting points for travelers.

Best known was the adobe post Fort John, which the emigrants almost uniformly called Fort Laramie. Nearby Fort Platte received some substantial trade until its abandonment by Lupton's firm. Fort Bernard, downstream on the North Platte a few miles was quite important into the 1840's. Still farther downstream about 2 miles beyond Fort Bernard lay a regular cluster of trading posts including Bordeau's Post, Gratiot Houses, etc.

From time to time there were posts such as "Sand Point" not far from present South Torrington, and others. These posts were concentrated on the south side of the valley, attesting its importance in volume of travel.<sup>14</sup>

Upstream from Fort Laramie on the south bank, lay such posts as Ward and Guerrier's near "Register Cliff".<sup>15</sup>

Many of the people in the early 1841-48 emigrations were seasoned veterans of several frontier moves in their own lifetime, accustomed to the problems of wagon travel. In times of high water they either avoided it or else took it in stride, using river ferrying and fording methods developed to a fine degree on the much more formidable streams of the Ohio Valley and the lower Missouri country. But the coming of new classes of emigrants beginning with eastern and European recruits to Mormonism and quickly followed by the broad spectrum of gold-seekers in 1849, there grew up a seasonal demand for reliable river crossings.

The opportunity afforded by this activity attracted several classes of ferrymen. Some were the old Indian traders like the Bissonettes, Richards, and their adherents. Others were newcomers who stayed a season or two to trade and do ferrying, and often lumped together as "Missourians" including in their number the many Anglo mountain-men who preferred to stay in the west after their years of freedom in the fur trade. A third, and better organized group were the Mormons, who saw a chance to help their

own group's emigration while at the same making a profit from passing "gentiles."

Some main ferrying points within this study area lay at the mouth of the Laramie, at the mouth of Deer Creek, and in a long strip of river front from present Evansville to present Bessemer Bend in the Casper area.

Even more than the generally good fording points, the established ferries tended to become nodes of concentration in the interbraid of trails.<sup>16</sup>

Several of the trading posts on the main emigrant trail developed into centers of a number of kinds of historic activity, and are worth discussion at greater length than is practicable in the historic sites compendium section of this paper. The three major ones that stand out are: the Fort John phase of "Fort Laramie," 1841-1849; the Joseph Bissonnette complex at Deer Creek, 1849-1866; and Richard's Bridge and Trading Post near present Evansville, 1853-1865.

"Fort Laramie," (Fort John):

Fortuitously situated on a low terrace just above the flood plain of the Laramie, near a number of good fording places on that stream, this was one of the most important trading posts on the emigrant trails through our Study Area. Built by the trading partnership of Sublette and Campbell in 1841 to replace the earlier Fort William, it opened its doors just in time to serve the emigrant trade. So many emigrants saw it within the next few years that it became one of the stereotypes of what a western fort ought to look like!

111 by 157 feet in outside dimensions, with an adobe wall about fifteen feet high, the post had 12 foot square blockhouse at two corners and a second-story section bridging over its main gate. The inside of most of the enclosure was lined with living quarters, a store, and warehouses for trade goods and for the bulky Indian-tanned buffalo robes that made up the bulk of the trade with the natives at this time.

For a time, the post was owned by Astor's American Fur Company, but that organization sold its "Upper Missouri Outfit" including all its Rocky Mountain operations to Pierre Choteau, Jr., and Company in 1835.

In terms of significance, this post played a fairly critical role in the passage of the emigrants of the first few years of travel over the western trails. Most of that early emigration consisted of seasoned



woodsmen from older frontiers, but few of them were prepared in full for a trek of this magnitude. Many resupplied themselves, or repaired their wagons, or traded off surplus items, or simply rested in relative security around this fort before tackling the rougher country beyond.

The Choteau organization profited from the trade, and the emigrant traffic probably kept the post alive longer than would have otherwise been the case. But the company was more attracted to the Indian trade still available along the navigable rivers of the northern plains, and welcomed a chance to sell the dilapidated post to the Army in 1849.

From that point on, it was for a few years used as living quarters, warehouse space and for a time as a hospital before being torn down to make room for more military buildings at the ever expanding military post of Fort Laramie.<sup>17</sup>

#### Deer Creek:

Joseph Bissonnette and other business associates built their trading post at Deer Creek about 1851. They maintained a ferry-boat operation in this vicinity, used by many emigrants to cross the flood swollen North Platte at the peak of the travel season each year.

The location was not a bad one for a combination of Indian and emigrant trade. The Sioux, with whom Bissonnette had close ties, had pushed into this region along the upper North Platte in the early 1850's and for about ten years their effective frontier with the Shoshoni lay around the mouth of the Sweetwater.

A simple string of connected log cabins (with possibly a stock-corral attached) made up the post. Bissonnette relied on the Indian's economic dependence and his men's wife's relatives to keep the peace.

The importance of this post was enhanced by the fact that in 1857, the Indian Bureau's representatives built Deer Creek (Upper Platte) Agency not far away, probably a short distance upstream on Deer Creek.

The Mormons, at the height of their immigration, built a trading post, blacksmith shops and a small farm in this same neighborhood as a supply base for their people.

In 1851, an associate of Bissonnette's, John Richard, Sr., built a toll bridge on the North Platte not far away, but this washed down the stream at the peak of the flood season that next year, and Richard relocated in 1853 at a point near present Evansville.<sup>18</sup>

### Richard's Bridge and Trading Post:

John Richard, Sr., was a trader of French ancestry out of Missouri, like most of the "Frenchmen" of the upper Platte trade. Earlier, he had operated Fort Bernard, Fort Platte and a series of other smaller trading houses for his employers and partners. Married to Indian women, he had by 1840's a considerable family, and many Indian hangers-on.

Richard came to the site in question in 1853. Documents recently uncovered prove that in this venture he was in partnership with a number of other traders, and that Joseph Bissonnette was an important enough member of the group to selectively recruit a good accountant from St. Louis to look after the books here!

That spring of 1853, the Richards first built a substantial toll-bridge of pine timber from nearby Casper Mountain. This required a sizeable outlay of labor and hardware in addition to the timber, and represented a really substantial investment at the prevailing labor costs of the region. They recovered their investment fairly quickly, for abundant emigrant diary accounts testify to the amounts of tolls being collected, and to Richard's sharp and effective trading of household goods, livestock and liquor.

Richard's post remained in operation clear up to 1865, and not long after it was closed, it was torn down by the army to furnish construction materials and firewood for the then expanding Fort Casper, five miles upstream.

During its first ten years in existence it was the most important trading post in the vicinity and probably the third largest community in Wyoming. In the 1850's it served on two different occasions as the nucleus for small military posts, discussed separately in the compendium.<sup>19</sup>

DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS





Here we will discuss commercial transportation and communications through the Study Area in the period 1841-1869. In this period these systems developed most heavily to serve the Pacific Coastal valleys and the settlements in Utah and Montana and Idaho. They did, however, serve as the base for the evolution of internal lines of communication within the surrounding region in the succeeding period.

Really heavy freight moved to the Pacific Coastal settlements by ship, so there was not much movement of commercial freight over these trails in the early portion of the period under consideration. Emphasis was rather upon the development of mail and passenger and light express service, all agonizingly slow in coming. While there were significant numbers of Americans in the Willamette Valley by 1843 and a few in California, only irregular and unscheduled couriers provided direct contact with the States until 1848. West-bound wagon trains occasionally carried mail and light express on an informal basis to the new settlements. Settlers and missionaries sometimes sent delegates from their communities east with important messages.<sup>20</sup> Only in 1847 did Congress officially recognize the special communications problems of this detached far western frontier.

Then, on March 3, 1847, Congress authorized the first U.S. Post Office Department mail shipments to the Pacific Coast. This act provided that the mail was to move on ships provided by contractors working under the direct supervision of officers of the U.S. Navy.<sup>21</sup> The first mail under this system sailed out of Charleston, South Carolina to Panama in the fall of 1848. At that point contractors carried it overland on the well-developed trail to the Pacific, where other ships of the system carried the shipment to California and Oregon. Time in transit was about four weeks.<sup>22</sup>

While waiting for the Congressionally-authorized system to develop, several private companies tried to open an overland service. One such firm carried a single private mail shipment from California in the spring of 1848. Another firm advertised passenger and mail stage service from the Missouri settlements to California. This firm made only one trip, in reality, simply an organized wagon train with 120 "passengers" and a load of mail.<sup>23</sup>

There was much dissatisfaction with the oceanic mail service, particularly after the loss of one entire shipload of mail and a few harrowing

experiences of the other contract carrier vessels. In 1850, the U.S. Post Office Department issued its first contract for overland mail service to the Pacific. The segment relevant to our Study Area went to Samuel H. Woodson, of Independence, Missouri. Woodson agreed to carry a mail shipment monthly from Independence to Salt Lake City beginning July 1, 1850. His contract was to run for four years at \$19,500 per year. There were no provisions for stations along the way, and no provision for passenger service. Woodson used pack-mules to carry the mail, and followed the established route to South Pass and the "Mormon Trail," from that point to Utah settlements. He soon subcontracted the Fort Laramie/Salt Lake City segment of his route to others.<sup>24</sup>

When Woodson's contract expired in 1854, W.M.F. McGraw obtained a contract reflecting the demand for better service. McGraw's contract called for monthly mail shipments in four-horse coaches, with thirty days allowed for the trip.<sup>25</sup> McGraw only held the contract for two years, by which time he had become involved in other federal contracts in the region involving the wagon roads program.<sup>26</sup>

Hiram Kimball of Utah, acting as an agent for the "B.Y. Express Company," secured the next contract for mail service between Missouri and Salt Lake City on October 9, 1856. This provided for monthly mail shipments with carriages or wagons. Kimball set to work speedily to organize a system of stations along the way. These were intended to serve as mail relay stations, repair points and stock-tending stations for the line. They were also intended to be used as supply points for west-bound Mormon emigrants. There is a great deal of confusion between the sites of these stations and those of the later stagecoach and pony express and telegraph lines. Some of them were simple roadside blacksmith shops and horse corrals with limited accommodations. Others, such as one at Deer Creek on the North Platte were intended to be substantial farming communities. Within our study area there was at least one such establishment, probably two, and possibly more. Further research beyond the scope of this study might untangle this set of stations more effectively from the other sites along the trail.<sup>27</sup>

The outbreak of trouble between Mormon Settlers and territorial officials early in 1857 brought on the Utah Expedition. As the U.S. Regular Army advanced toward the territory, Kimball's station-keepers and their adherents retreated toward Utah, burning most of their buildings and

destroying their supplies to prevent the army from utilizing them. There was a general breakdown of civilian communications in the west during this period.<sup>28</sup>

As a temporary expedient, S.B. Miles contracted to carry the mail in the winter of 1858, with coaches to be used in summer and pack mules in winter.<sup>29</sup>

That same year a major advance in the level of service came when J.M. Hockaday and others received a new contract providing for weekly mail to be carried in four-horse coaches. This resulted in new mail stations to replace those destroyed by retreating Mormon contractors and militia. Hockaday's firm carried the mail from May 1, 1858 to November of 1860 under this contract.<sup>30</sup>

Problems with the regular contract service west of Salt Lake City in 1859, and the development of a new center of population around the Colorado gold fields led to the formation of the Central Overland, California and Pike's Peak Express Company. This firm first secured a star route contract for service from Salt Lake City to California. By the spring of 1860, its passenger and express coaches were serving the Colorado settlements tri-weekly, and a connecting service over the old trails to Salt Lake City took mail semi-monthly to connect with the star route west of that point.<sup>31</sup>

Largely as a promotional venture for a proposed daily mail service to the Far West, Russell, Majors and Waddell (also involved in the COCPP) launched the famed "Pony Express" in 1860. The frequent change-of-horses requirement of this service resulted in the building of a number of intermediate stations along the old trail. There has been a great deal of attention given to the matter of "Pony Express" stations in general, and the whole episode has been so heavily romanticized that there is some confusion between these stations that were holdovers from the earlier COCPP and Hockaday stations, those that served only one of these systems, and those whose function was extended in time to serve as telegraph stations, etc. Generally the "Pony Express" change of horses stations were about 12 to 15 miles apart, with more pretentious "home stations," about 60 miles apart.<sup>32</sup>

With the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, the federal government transferred the responsibility for that portion of the mail which had moved over a southern route (the Butterfield Overland Mail) to the "Central



Route" passing through our Study Area. Russell, Majors and Waddell's COCPP subcontracted the service between the South Platte River in Colorado and Salt Lake City. This new arrangement provided for the long-sought daily mail coach service.<sup>33</sup>

The COCPP ran into progressively higher operating costs, absorbed massive losses on the "Pony Express," and generally bogged down financially. Soon its employees were near mutiny and openly referred to their company as the "Clean Out of Cash and Poor Pay." Finally, on March 21, 1862, Ben Holladay, well known already for his operations in mail contracting and stagecoaching in the Far West, bought out the interests of the COCPP and reorganized its business operations.<sup>34</sup>

The first order of business to affect our study area was a reorganization and partial relocation of the line to improve its efficiency. Russell, Majors, and Waddell had studied alternative routes from the Colorado gold country to Utah in the hope of shortening the line. Winter conditions on Berthoud Pass, governmental objections to abandoning the established line on the old trail, and internal management problems of the COCPP all prevented their moving the line. It was proven, however, that it would be much more efficient if the same stage line could serve the Colorado settlements and then proceed as directly as possible to Salt Lake City.

Such a route was available, pioneered in part by Ashley in 1825, further explored in part by Fremont in the early 1840's, used by the Cherokee prospectors bound for California in 1849, and mapped by Stansbury in most of its length in 1850.

This route came up out of Colorado from the Cache la Poudre valley over a low pass to the Laramie Plain, then ran westward just north of the Medicine Bow Mountains, crossed the North Platte River, went over Bridger's Pass and struck directly out across the desert to rejoin the older trails not far from Fort Bridger. It made possible the consolidation of mail and passenger service across the portion of the line with the lowest local service and branch service demands. It shortened the line by at least a hundred miles.<sup>35</sup>

With all of these advantages, it still took an additional impetus to secure government approval to abandon the old mail route through the study area. Indians provided this in the spring of 1862. From the earliest fur trade days the trails over South Pass provided good routes for war parties

in the perpetual intertribal warfare of the region. The dispersed and lightly-manned stage stations provided tempting targets-of-opportunity by the spring of 1862. At and around them, an enterprising warparty might sometimes be able to run off some of the handsome and prestigious "American horses." A careless employee might yield a good gun or two, and other "possibles," including perhaps his scalp.

Some of these raids may have been made by the Utes. Most were made by the Shoshoni, now restless as a result of conflict between their western relatives and prospectors who were pushing into Oregon, Nevada and Idaho from the West. Some raids were undoubtedly conducted by the Arapaho as an incidental part of their raids on the Shoshoni. Some may have been manufactured out of the whole cloth of fiction.<sup>36</sup>

These Indian raids seem to have been welcome news to many. The Coloradans wanted the line moved to better serve them than did the "branch line" from Julesburg. Holladay wanted to shorten and simplify the line for management reasons. With the ammunition of Indian raids added to other arguments it was possible to get Col. John M. Chivington of the Colorado Volunteers to issue an order to move the line to the "Cherokee Trail." The Post Office Department concurred in the change, and Holladay contracted with Colorado firms to build the new stations.

The new line bypassed the present Study Area by from 80 to 100 miles at most points. The relocation occasioned outright abandonment of most of the stations along the line. Only those that also housed telegraph stations remained operational and under the nominal protection of the Army. Personnel and livestock from the stations to be abandoned were gathered under military escort at a point on the Sweetwater near Plante's Station on Muddy Creek and thence escorted from that point through Whiskey Gap to the new line.

This ended federal civilian mail service through the study area for some years.<sup>37</sup>

#### The Telegraph Line:

The major transcontinental communications breakthrough of the period was the Pacific Telegraph. Under the leadership of Edward Creighton, the company built its line across the continent during the year 1861. By late summer of that year the Study Area had a telegraphic connection to the east, and by October the line was fully operational for transcontinental messages.

A word about the technology of the telegraph is necessary here: The telegraph of the period used copper/zinc/acid wet batteries for the power that made electrical impulses flow down the wire from a sending key to a receiving sounder or a tape printer. These batteries had a limited potential for delivery of power considering the electrical resistance of a practical weight of wire. To overcome this limitation in long-distance transmission, the inventor developed the relay. This was a magnetic instrument similar to the sounder that transformed the electrical energy received into the motion of a pivoted arm. Unlike the simple-receiving-sounder, the relay used the arm to activate a set of contact-points that controlled another circuit to send the message along for another fifty or more miles. Batteries required fresh metal "crow's feet" electrodes from time to time, and maintenance of their fluid level. The relay instruments required frequent adjustment. The line itself was subject to being broken down by ice storms, to having its poles "rubbed down" by beavers and by domestic stock along the trails, and to occasional vandalism. Indians found (when they had overcome superstition and deliberately planted fears) the lines a convenient source of wire for all sorts of useful things right down to musket balls, just as did their primitive counterparts in the far east:

"(Now a slug that is hammered from  
telegraph wire  
Is a thorn in the flesh and a  
rankling fire.)"<sup>38</sup>

So, there had to be relay stations at 50 to 75 mile intervals, near being the better. These housed a telegrapher and one or more repairmen. The company placed these at points that were often major stage stations and established trading posts. In Wyoming, there were such stations at Fort Laramie, Horse Shoe Creek, Deer Creek, Guinard's Bridge, Sweetwater Station, Split Rock, Three Crossings, St. Mary's, South Pass, Pacific Springs, Green River, etc., with five of these in or on the margins of the Study Area, but coinciding with other sites.

This telegraph line remained in operation from 1861 until September of 1867. Then, the company completed another line across Wyoming paralleling the Overland Trail. It discontinued service over the old line and withdrew its operators, turning the line over to the army! In the interim a competing line had been built along the Overland Trail in 1866.

The army withdrew down the line to Fort Fetterman, cut the line at an



appropriate point and brought its end into Fort Fetterman, where for many years it served as a military telegraph line to Fort Laramie and points east. From that time until new lines were built into the South Pass Mining country from other directions, the area was without wire communication.<sup>39</sup>

#### Freight Lines:

There was a little wagon-freighting by private parties in the mid-1840's, but in general large-scale wagon freight operations did not develop in the region until the mid-1850's. Then a combination of demand in the growing Utah settlements, the needs of trail-side trading posts brought some freighting over the old trail through the study area. These freighters did not develop stations of their own, and moved in very much the same way as the emigrant traffic did.

With the Harney Expedition against the Sioux on the North Platte in 1855, closely followed by the Utah Expedition, military requirements developed for huge quantities of supplies. Support for such points as Camp Floyd, Fort Bridger and other military posts became a major incentive for the development of large-scale, well-organized freighting companies. They used the old trail through our Study Area to some degree. They felt, however, the same pull of demand to serve the Colorado gold country, without, the restrictions of route planning imposed by postal authorities on the stage lines. There is every indication that the Utah Expedition marked the beginning of rapid change by freighters to the shorter Overland Route. By 1862 very little freight moved over the Oregon Trail other than that destined for support of the military posts that guarded the telegraph line. Even trains for Montana now took the South Platte/Cherokee Trail/Bridger's Pass route, or the Lodge pole Creek/Cheyenne Pass/Bryan's Pass route through the region to a point on Ham's Fork where trails angled off for Idaho.<sup>40</sup>

#### Structural Character of the Stage Stations:

Each of the main stations within the Study Area consisted of a block of buildings, sometimes with one or more wings, built of logs-in-panels (hewed logs in relatively short lengths, set horizontally between vertical posts set in the ground). The stations occupied during the 1862-67 period by troops east of the divide are the best documented. Lt. Caspar Collins drew a carefully detailed set of ground plans for each of these stations, which would represent its appearance in most cases at the peak of development. His correspondence also contained some detailed

material on the structures. Collins and Bugler C.W. Moellman of the 11th OVC also made perspective sketches of several of the posts that are helpful.<sup>41</sup>

Locations of most of the stations seem to be fairly well documented as mapped. These stations, like other major sites along the trail have been the subject of extensive field work by Paul Henderson, L.C. Bishop, and more recently by Aubrey Haines.<sup>42</sup>

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN THE STUDY AREA



Basically, the army engaged in three main kinds of activity in this area:

1. Early activities to support the western emigration.
2. Protection of the telegraph line 1862-67.
3. Reduction of hostile Indian activity in the area following the opening of settlement.

The first properly discussed here, along with major expeditions that passed through the study area in early years. The others will be covered in succeeding parts of this report.

#### Early Military Activities in Support of Emigration, Exploration and Mapping:

Throughout much of the west the role of the army was not one of exploration in the sense of examining untouched country. The traders and mountain men had already discovered virtually every easy gradient route throughout the west before the army came. The army role began with the bringing of well-managed scientific reconnaissance techniques to the region. During fur trade days a few artists, journalists and naturalists accompanied the fur caravans, but seldom did anyone with any scientific capability for mapping route and topography and other conditions with precision come along.

Much of the early military exploration of the West missed our study area by a considerable margin, such as the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1804-06,<sup>43</sup> the Zebulon Pike expedition of 1806-07,<sup>44</sup> and the Stephen H. Long expedition of 1819-1820.<sup>45</sup> These efforts did, however, set a pattern for the expeditions that ultimately delineated the region. In the earliest two listed above, the officers of the expedition were supposed to record a wealth of data about the country. They did fill in map and the knowledge of the country with remarkable skill considering their limited training. Their experiences also showed the desirability of having trained scientific specialists along, since one or two men could not possibly record all the various phenomena of interest and still do the mapping and manage the expedition.

The Long expedition included a botanist, a zoologist, a geologist, two artists, and two trained topographic assistants to the expedition's leader. This pattern was followed and expanded somewhat in the first military expedition to pass through the Study Area.<sup>46</sup>

Missionary movement to the Pacific Northwest in the late 1830's, a trickle of people who might stay in 1840, and the beginning of real Oregon and California emigration in 1841, set the stage for the expedition led by Lt. John C. Fremont in 1842, Senator Thomas Hart Benton described the situation:

It was not an act of government leading the people and protecting them, but like all other great emigrations of that race on our continent, it was the act of the people going forward without government aid or countenance, establishing their possession and compelling the government to follow with its shield and spread it over them.<sup>47</sup>

Fremont went out over the Santa Fe Trail to Bent's Old Fort, thence north over the high plains to Fort Laramie (more properly, Fort John) where he picked up the emigrant route. The expedition followed the Oregon Trail to South Pass, crossed it and camped on the Big Sandy while Fremont explored the Wind River Range and climbed the peak that today bears his name. In 1843, Fremont again set out over the Oregon Trail, this time to go clear through to Oregon, mapping the country as far as Walla Walla. A naval expedition under Commander Charles Wilkes had examined the country inland along the Columbia and the Snake in 1841-1842.<sup>48</sup>

The seven sheets of maps prepared by Fremont's topographer, Charles Preuss, were the first professionally prepared maps that included our study area, and for a number of years they remained the best available.<sup>49</sup>

#### Shows-of-Force on the Plains:

The next military expedition was intended to gather additional information on the plains and into the mountains, but more fundamentally, it marked a new procedure. It consisted of a substantial show of armed force instead of the minimal escort of the military mapping parties. This expedition in 1845 was led by Col. Stephen Watts Kearny of the First U.S. Dragoons, with five companies of his regiment. They followed the emigrant route all the way from Fort Leavenworth to South Pass, backtracked to Fort Laramie, and returned to the settlements after a side-trip to Bent's Old Fort.<sup>50</sup>

In due course, following the territorial settlement with Britain over the Oregon Country, and the settlement of land transfers attendant to the Mexican War, the government sent still larger forces into the region and through the study area. In 1849, the army bought the site of the old fur posts at Fort Laramie and began construction of a major military post. The Regiment of Mounted Riflemen under Colonel William W. Loring marched



up the trail to South Pass, and on over the trail to Oregon. They went by way of Fort Hall, Idaho, another trading post where they left a garrison to begin construction of a military post.<sup>51</sup>

Captain Howard Stansbury of the Corps of Topographical Engineers was supposed to accompany Loring's column to Fort Hall, but arrived too late at Fort Leavenworth. Here he assembled a small expedition of his own and moved out over the trail amid an almost continuous stream of emigrant parties. His journal is one of the best day-to-day accounts of the many for that year.

In late 1849 and early 1850, Stansbury made an extensive survey of routes in southeastern Idaho and northeastern Utah. He returned to the States in 1850 over a new route east from Fort Bridger, under Jim Bridger's own guidance. This was the same old trapper trail used by the Cherokees and other '49ers the year before. Ultimately it would become part of the later Overland Stage route. While this 1850 return trip thus bypassed our study area it helped to lay the groundwork for major transportation changes within a decade.<sup>52</sup>

#### The Railroad Surveys:

The Pacific Railroad Survey Act of 1853 instructed the Corps of Topographical Engineers to examine a number of competing alternative routes for a railroad from the States to the Pacific. General topographic examination would determine general comparative feasibility as railroad routes. These were not to be detailed engineering surveys. The routes to be examined were selected from political and sectional considerations. Interestingly enough, neither the South Pass route nor the Bridger's Pass route were officially considered at this time. Captain George B. McClellan did pass over the Oregon Trail on his way to survey routes through the Cascades for a northern railway route.<sup>53</sup>



EXPLORATION AWAY FROM THE MAIN TRAILS

1851 - 1860



### The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851:

Given the sheer numbers of emigrants passing through the Indian country on their way to Oregon and California and Utah, the Government hoped to avert trouble between the citizens and the natives by negotiating a treaty patterned in general after those of other areas in 1851.

Federal representatives, army officers, and the notable missionary Fr. P.J. DeSmet all issued calls to tribes of the region. Lured by curiosity, assurances of military protection, and the hope of presents, many tribes responded.

Indians from as far away as the upper Missouri and eastern Idaho responded. As their bands trailed into Fort Laramie, the number of campers there swelled. Vast horse-herds cropped the grazing land for miles around.

The treaty commissioners moved their headquarters downstream on the North Platte several times, finally reaching an acceptable camping place on Horse Creek, well below the Wyoming line, where the treaty concluded.

The treaty provided right of transit, etc. for U.S. citizens through the Indian country, for a general recognition of tribal territorial rights, and for annuities to be paid to the tribes by the Government, subject to deductions for depredations by their numbers.

This was the Government's first good official look at the varied tribes of the plains at the height of their horse/buffalo-hunter culture. Fr. DeSmet drafted a rough map of tribal territories of the use of the commissioners that provided the most up to date version of the then-fluid tribal locations.

FATHER P.J. DeSMET'S TREK

By 1851, DeSmet was well known among the Indians along the Yellowstone River. He viewed his role as a missionary to include a continued effort to reconcile the warring plains tribes with one another and with the government. That year, as he did many times subsequently, DeSmet went into the Indian country to bring representatives of the tribes in to conferences with the government.

Assembling a sizeable band of Indians at Fort Alexander on the Yellowstone in August, he headed south on the 17th. He came up the Rosebud to the bid bend, across to the Tongue, reaching that stream on the 22nd of August. DeSmet headed south across country, striking the Powder near the mouth of Salt Creek. After a conference there with some Crows, DeSmet took their advice and headed south through the Salt Creek country, where the rough terrain disabled several of his vehicles. Finally they reached the Oregon Trail at Red Buttes and took the road down to Fort Laramie where the treaty conferences were getting under way.<sup>54</sup>



THE HUNTING PARTY OF SIR ST. GEORGE GORE

While it left no detailed record comparable to the exploring expeditions of the 'fifties, the large hunting expedition of Sir St. George Gore created a considerable stir amongst both traders and Indians from its sheer size and opulence.

Gore came to Fort Laramie in 1855, recruited Jim Bridger as a guide and moved off up the North Platte. They left the river at the mouth of Box Elder Creek and cut across country bearing to the west of Pumpkin Butte and descended Dry Fork to the Powder. Gore hunted the country from there down to the mouth of Powder River, wintered on the Yellowstone and descended the Missouri from Fort Union the following year. The party's sole motive was sport hunting on a large scale, a major "safari" as it were.<sup>55</sup>

## THE WARREN EXPEDITION

Lt. G.K. Warren of the Corps of Topographical Engineers accompanied Harney on the expedition of 1855. In 1856, he explored the lower reaches of the Yellowstone River. In 1857 orders from Washington sent him out again into the high plains, this time to examine country within our present Study Area.

His expedition left Sioux City on July 6th and in two divisions examined the country on the Loup River and the Niobrara. From the upper reaches of the latter stream, they went overland to Fort Laramie where they picked up supplies.

Here on September 4th, they set out:

"...direct for the Black Hills, via Raw Hide butte, Old Woman Creek, the south fork of the Shyenne, and Beaver Creek; up a branch of this last we entered the Black Hills. We continued north to the vicinity of the Inyan Kara..."

At that point they met a large force of Sioux, some of whom appeared hostile. After lengthy conferences, they retreated about 40 miles over their back trail and then set out eastward around the south end of the Hills and examined the eastern front of them, as far north as Bear Butte before setting out en route home through Dakota.<sup>56</sup>

The second real scientific expedition to delineate the character of portions of the Study Area off to the north of the Platte was that of Captain William F. Reynolds, of the Corps of Topographical Engineers. Reynolds assembled at Fort Pierre in the spring of 1859 a scientific expedition consisting of J.D. Hutton and J.H. Snowden, topographers, H.C. Fillebrown, meteorologist, Antoin Schonborn, meteorologist and artist, Dr. F.V. Hayden, naturalist and surgeon, Dr. M.C. Hines, surgeon and assistant naturalist, and George Wallace, timekeeper and computer. Reynolds second in command was Lt. Henry Maynadier.

The party left Fort Pierre with a small military escort on the morning of June 28, 1859, heading west toward the Black Hills. They skirted the Hills on the north, camping on July 11th within a mile of Bear Butte. They passed briefly through northeastern Wyoming, crossing from the "North Fork of the Cheyenne" (Belle Fourche) to the Little Missouri on July 18th at the point where those streams make their closest approach to one another. On July 20th, Hutton and an interpreter Zephyr Recontre made a side trip to Devils Tower. At this point Reynolds' Sioux guide slipped away from the party, and Reynolds expressed the thought that "...he is afraid to remain with us

longer, as we are now nearly out of the Sioux country and will soon be among the Crows.

Leaving Wyoming at this time, Raynolds and his party moved on to Powder River, down that stream some distance and explored the country between Mizpah Creek and the Yellowstone. Writing from the Powder River's lower course in Montana, he said: "My American guide, Bridger, is now on familiar ground and appears to be entirely at home in this country."

As the summer proceeded, Raynolds explored the country upstream along the Yellowstone, and on Tullock Creek detached a party under Lt. Maynadier to explore the country to the south while Raynolds himself took a side trip to the mouth of the Big Horn Canyon.

After examining the lower reaches of the Canyon, Raynolds and his party paralleled the front of the Big Horn Mountains to the southeast, and crossed the Little Horn, Pass Creek, and Tongue River reentering present Wyoming between the latter two streams, northwest of present Dayton. He made one short side trip into the Big Horns in mid-September.

Raynolds encountered on the Clear Fork the same band of Crows he had seen at Fort Sarpy on the Yellowstone in the earlier part of the summer. With them was "a Spaniard," "sent by Richard at the Platte Bridge to bring the Crows there to trade..." Pushing on southerly toward Powder River, the party encountered a large band of Arapahoes, led by "Friday" "...who speaks English quite well, having spent some time while a boy in St. Louis..." The party reached Powder River on September 24th.

While in camp on that stream, they took a side trip 15 miles downstream to visit the site of Montero's Portuguese Houses," then in ruins. They explored the country to the south and reached the North Platte near Red Buttes on October 11th.

Here, they found the main emigrant route, and Raynolds said:

Before starting I had in my ignorance asked Bridger if there was any danger of crossing the road without knowing it. I now understand fully his surprise, as it is as marked as any turnpike in the east. It is hard, dry, and dusty, and gave evidence of the immense amount of travel that passes over it... We were seldom out of sight of some vehicle upon this great highway.

The party soon reached Richard's Bridge, the first settlement encountered since Fort Sarpy on the Yellowstone. Raynolds, both religious and a teetotaler, was mightily offended when the officer commanding his escort slipped quietly out of sight and let his enlisted men get uproariously drunk after this long march. And to make matters worse, a court-martial assembled

by Reynolds found the officer innocent by reason of the fact that Reynolds, an engineer officer had no authority over the combat troops that comprised the escort.

After a reconnaissance for suitable wintering point, Reynolds accepted the offer of Major Thomas Twiss to let the party stay in the abandoned buildings of the Mormon farm near the Upper Platte Agency of Deer Creek. He indicates in his report that the Agency itself was then housed in part of the Mormon complex.<sup>57</sup>

Maynadier came in from his own reconnaissance of the country between Tullock Creek and Richard's Bridge on October 12th. Pushing up Tullock creek early in September to its head, he had crossed the divide to the Rosebud and ascended that stream to its big bend cut across to the Tongue, and traveled on up Goose Creek and Little Goose, crossing to Clear Fork on the 17th of September.

Maynadier then moved down Clear Fork to its junction with the Powder. They then went up Powder River to the mouth of Crazy Woman Fork, and ascended that stream for 60 miles. On September 30th, they encountered Friday's band of Arapahoes, and Friday discussed at length the route they should take and provided news of his recent encounter with Reynolds. On October 2nd, they struck Reynolds trail and followed it to the Platte

<sup>58</sup>

Not long after arriving at Deer Creek, Reynolds sent out J.H. Snowden to make a reconnaissance of the country to the north. Snowden and seven men including the other principal scientific members of the party went down Deer Creek to Bissonnettes trading post and there engaged "Michael Boyer," as a guide. This is apparently the same "Mich Bouyer" who led a very active life as a guide and interpreter for the ensuing years and died with the soldiers in the Custer fight in 1876.

Snowden's party explored the country north to the Pumpkin Buttes. Snowden climbed the middle butte from which "The whole range of the Big Horn mountains, from the head of Clear Fork to the head of Powder river, all the higher peaks now covered with snow, could be distinctly recognized..."

Leaving Pumpkin Buttes, Snowden explored around the head of the Belle Fourche and that of the north fork of Cheyenne River proper, and then moved south to reach the Platte near the mouth of LaBonte creek on November 2, 1859.<sup>59</sup>

Reynolds wintered at Deer Creek, received a new soldier escort in the spring, and spent the season of 1860 exploring the Wind River country and the Big Horn Basin.<sup>60</sup>

Raynolds maps of the country explored in these two seasons was the first really accurate depiction of most of that vast region. It served as the principal base-map for further exploration and as the main military campaign map in use until 1877.

Many of his observations were very perceptive considering the short time he spent in any given part of the region. Some were of importance to the Army a few years later, for Reynolds said:

At the eastern base of the Big Horn mountains there is a belt of country some 20 miles in width that is peculiarly suitable for a wagon road, and which I doubt not will become the great line of travel into the valley of the Three Forks...

He pointed out also that the grasslands of the region could support "vast herds of cattle" and demonstrated that livestock could winter on these ranges.<sup>61</sup>



## BEGINNINGS OF CONFLICT WITH THE INDIANS

Conditions along the main trails west in the early years of emigration changed steadily in such a way as to make some kind of conflict with the Indians inevitable. In the whole period between 1842 and 1860, very few emigrants became casualties to Indian warfare. For that matter, there were few conflicts with the army. But the confrontations that did occur were symptomatic of basic problems underlying any attempt to reconcile the two cultures that were making a shaky contact here along the trails.

From the earliest emigration to 1848, most of the travelers were, if not regular and experienced "movers" from the fringe of early frontiers, at least seasoned frontier farmers who understood the basics of frontier survival and had some knowledge of the Indian from the midwestern frontier. Most of this group were tough, aggressive, often quarrelsome. But they were in a hurry to get to Oregon, or California, or Utah, and they minimized their contacts with the Indian on that account alone.

It was inevitable that the less experienced travelers who rode the crest of the gold rush emigration, and those who followed from every walk of life, would include people who would do a multitude of foolish things that would get them in trouble with the Indians. Straggling off away from a wagon train to hunt, see the scenery, or staying behind to rest or make repairs were practically open invitations to Indian warriors whose warfare was built around knocking over such easy targets-of-opportunity.

Attempting to trade with the Indians on open ground, particularly when outnumbered or outgunned, placed the traveler at a disadvantage, since a universal "joke" among the plains tribes was to take a traveler's belongings of value and replace them with the worst cast offs of the group, and put him either afoot or on their sorriest and most broken down old horse to make his way the best he could!

Travelers did make these basic mistakes, but up through 1860, accidents, disease, and conflict among the emigrants themselves all claimed more lives than conflict with the natives!

Actually, travelers themselves were not the primary cultural frontier along the trails. Rather, the traders along the trails were. Dispersed in small numbers at increasingly small and shabby establishments, custodians of the very kinds of things the Indians wanted most, the traders were natural targets for theft, from casual shoplifting, to horse-raids to full-scale looting.<sup>62</sup>

By this time, most of these traders had intermarried with the tribes. When their relatives-by-marriage were present they had some protection from other tribes. Some bands of the Sioux were strong enough to have a deterrent effect by reputation among lesser tribes. But with relatives far away on the prairie, the trader's camp might be viewed by enemy tribes as just one more source of loot, horses and women!

The presence of relatives made a constant drain on the resources of a post in its own way, through Indian views of immediate and shared access to most consumer goods.

All in all, the trader maintained a precarious balance between diplomacy, aggressive protection of his property, philosophical acceptance of some of the consequences of an Indian wife, and constant opportunism on his own account.

In the 1850's when such traders often became the keepers of mail-contractor's change-of-horses stations, their interests and their relationships with their employers became entangled in the existing mesh of relationships with their relatives. The 1851 treaty at Horse Creek further complicated matters by making tribal annuities subject to deductions to pay for depredations committed by individual tribesmen.

Through the 'fifties, such depredations claims mounted, and incidents of friction that might have been shrugged off at an earlier date were chalked up for settlement.<sup>63</sup>

Another factor often overlooked is that the pressures of other tribes to the northeast, coupled with the arrival of the settler's frontier on the Mississippi had pushed more Indians out into the plains to compete for limited hunting and foraging resources.

Today, it appears that in the 1849-55 period, the Indians who camped often along the North Platte viewed the post at Fort Laramie as just another kind of trading post, and its outlying "government farm" as some kind of detached camp. The garrison was just not large enough to inspire much respect or fear.

In 1853, a sergeant from the Fort Laramie garrison, with a small detail of men got into an argument over the use of a ferry boat the detail was guarding, with a superior force of Indians. Shots were exchanged. That same year, Lt. Hugh Fleming and a small detail crossed to the Indian camps north of the Platte to recover stolen property. They became embroiled in a small fire-fight, the first army conflict with the Sioux.



Then in August of 1854, a Minniconjou named High-Forehead harvested a lame cow belonging to a passing caravan of Danish Mormon converts. Fleming decided to make an issue of compensation for the cow, and sent down eager young 2nd Lt. John Grattan with a small detail to arrest the Indian.

Grattan took along a mail contractor's employee, Auguste Lucien as interpreter. Lucien had a Sioux wife, had recently lost horses belonging to his employers to Indian raiders, and appears to have harboured a general resentment against the Sioux. He further got drunk during the eight-mile ride to the Brule camp where High Forehead was staying.

Arriving at the camp, Grattan unconditionally demanded the "thief". High-Forehead proved hard to find, and the Brules uncooperative. Grattan grew adamant. Someone fired a shot. Grattan and his men fired their howitzers and then their muskets. In minutes the Sioux overran the small party.

The incident touched off extensive investigations by the government. It also touched off a perilous time for the traders along the trails. At least one mail-contractor's station (at Ash Hollow) was burned by the Indians. The detail at the Government Farm was run off and the buildings burned and crops destroyed.<sup>64</sup>

In due course, the Government decided on a substantial show-of-force on the plains, with an expedition prepared to make an example of some sizeable and recalcitrant Indian band. The expedition, under the command of Brevet Brigandier General William S. Harney consisted of over 700 regulars, led largely by officers with extensive experience in the Mexican War, in the Southwest and on the plains.

Harney marched up the Platte in the late summer of 1855. From his camp near Ash Hollow, his scouts located a large camp of Brules on Blue Water Creek, a few miles to the northwest.

Harney moved his men out to confront the Sioux for negotiations, while sending a mounted contingent around behind to catch them in the event they sought to escape. When negotiations broke down, the troops moved in at Harney's signal. Dismounted Indians took refuge in rough ground but were overrun by Harney's seasoned infantrymen. Fleeing Sioux ran into Lt. Col. Philip St. George Cooke's screen of mounted troops.

The Brules lost all their tipis and camp equipment and supplies. Many Indians were killed in the fight. Seldom after did the Brules ever seek out a fight with the Army. Harney added to his considerable military record,

and gained a reputation with the Sioux that lasted a lifetime.<sup>65</sup>

After the Ash Hollow fight, Harney's column, the greatest to move through the region to that date, marched on up to Fort Laramie. Here, Harney for a time took command. He suspended the Indian agent summarily. He compelled traders to come in from up and down the Platte and camp near the post where their activities could be more closely supervised.

Noting the potential military and considerable commercial and emigrant importance of John Richard's bridge across the North Platte 125 miles above Fort Laramie, and its vulnerability to Indian action with Richard and his family in what amounted to internement, Harney sent Lt. James Deshler and 24 enlisted men up to the Bridge to winter in Richard's buildings. These men, called their post "Camp Davis" or "Fort Clay," but the Army soon adopted the designation "Camp at Platte Bridge."<sup>66</sup>

When Richard was allowed to return to his post in March of 1856, additional troops under the command of Captain Henry Heth were sent up, bringing the garrison to 3 officers, and 50 enlisted men. A civilian, Pat Sanders, was employed as a hunter, while Nicholas Scott served as an interpreter, Charles Hough as a teamster, and Nick Janis as an interpreter.<sup>67</sup>

Here in the vicinity of Richard's Bridge occurred the Army's first conflict with the Cheyennes. Richard reported that the Indians had taken possession of four stray horses. Heth ordered the Indians to give them up, and assured they would be paid for finding and herding them. The Indians brought in three horses. Little Wolf refused to give up the horse he had. Heth ordered the arrest of three of the Indians. Two made a break for freedom. One was shot down and killed, the other (presumably Little Wolf) escaped, and the third, Wolf Fire was put in the guardhouse in chains, and ultimately died there.

Wolf Fire's relatives made a break for the hills, and while on the run, killed a trapper they found alone. Dull Knife came in to Fort Laramie late in May and tried to make peace over this affair, but it was one of the series of incidents leading up to Colonel E.V. Sumner's extensive campaign against the Cheyennes in the summer of 1857, in Kansas.<sup>68</sup>

The troops at Richard's Bridge stayed on until the fall of 1856. That summer, Upper Platte Indian Agent Thomas Twiss campaigned actively to have the post kept in operation. We attribute his interest to his desire to improve commercial opportunities for his friends the Richards and the

Bissonnettes! Despite his efforts, the troops marched away in November.<sup>69</sup>

In the fall of 1855, Harney and his main column, leaving a reenforced garrison at Fort Laramie, marched off to the northeast out of our study area to winter at Fort Pierre on the Missouri River. But they left a situation in which the Brules, impressed with the army strength would always be viewed with some suspicion by the Ogalalas and other Sioux who had not yet tasted defeat. The campaign was impressive, but not decisive in its impact of the tribes.<sup>70</sup>

### THE UTAH EXPEDITION

In 1857, trouble broke out between the Federal Government and territorial officials (who were also key members of the Mormon Church) in Utah.

Faced with an organized threat to federal sovereignty over the territory, the Government launched a substantial show of force to overawe the Mormons. An initial column of regulars were slow getting under way because of the vast distance and the logistic problems involved. They marched over the emigrant trail through our Study Area, and wintered in western Wyoming in the vicinity of Fort Bridger.

As spring came on in 1858, the Army used Fort Laramie as one supply point for some of the additional west bound troops required by the Expedition.

In 1857, the Mormons located at Deer Creek, at the Platte River Ferry near Casper, and at mail stations along the line withdrew ahead of the troops to Utah. They burned some of their installations but left the unfinished buildings standing at Deer Creek.

They left some of their stock of arms in the care of John Richard, at his Platte Bridge. Accused of collaboration with the Mormons, Richard was interned again for a time at Fort Laramie, but regained control of his post before long.

Richard's Bridge was clearly the best freight wagon crossing of the upper North Platte, so the Army stationed forces there in the summer of 1858, and they remained until the spring of 1859. This force built a camp of board-floored tents with stone chimneys in which to winter. They called this post informally Camp Payne, but officially it was simply "Camp at Platte Bridge," as its predecessor of the Harney Expedition days had been.<sup>71</sup>

One of the principal effects of the Utah expedition was the development of new trails across the southern part of Wyoming, linking up with the route Bridger and Stansbury had publicized in 1850. These trails were used for some of the heavy traffic to and from Utah and became well enough publicized by 1859 to draw off much freight and emigrant traffic from the old emigrant route. New guidebooks on the region published in that period tended to emphasize the desirability of these routes.<sup>72</sup>



### LOUIS GUINARD'S POSTS AND BRIDGES

Louis Guinard was a trader of French ancestry, like many of his contemporaries along the Platte. But there were important differences. Guinard was a Canadian Frenchman, from Quebec, while the Richards, Bissonnettes, Raynals, etc. were from the closely knit French settlements of Missouri. Furthermore, where most of the traders on the North Platte were from the closely knit French settlements of Missouri. Furthermore, where most of the traders on the North Platte were intermarried with the Sioux, and a few with the Cheyenne, Guinard's wives were Shoshoni.

The country along the Sweetwater was basically still Shoshoni territory in 1857. Guinard sensed the potential for profit in the business of the Utah Expedition, and built a toll bridge and a trading post in that year, about a mile below Independence Rock. He cut some new timber for his bridge and buildings, but salvaged part of his materials from the abandoned contract mail station at the Rock. He made a sturdy set of log-in-panel buildings and attached a substantial stockade-type stock corral.

For a time his post served as a stage station, and then became the main station in this stretch of Pacific Telegraph in 1861.

With the profits of this venture, Guinard went down to a point on the North Platte five miles above Richard's Bridge and in 1859 built a still more extensive post and a thousand-foot long toll bridge over the North Platte. He was fortunate in getting the contract for a stage station here, along with an overnight stop which of course increased profits markedly. His establishment evidently did well for some time.

But by the early 1860's this region was getting to be Sioux and Cheyenne country. Guinard's Shoshoni relatives and children were in constant danger from the Sioux, who ultimately killed one of his sons.

The Ohio Volunteers garrisoned Guinard's establishment irregularly in 1862-64, and then steadily built up a larger garrison here in 1864-65. Called "Platte Bridge Station," this was the nucleus around which Fort Casper grew up. At some point in the period 1863-64, Guinard sold out to the Richards, who then simultaneously operated both the old 1853 period bridge and trading post along with the Guinard establishment.<sup>73</sup>

#### THE LUTHERAN MISSION ON POWDER RIVER

In the fall of 1859, while Captain William F. Reynolds and his staff

were wintering near the Upper Plate Agency on Deer Creek, a small group

of German Lutheran missionaries from Iowa also settled there for the

winter, intending to use the station as their jumping off place for a

trip to establish a mission among the Crow Indians the following year.

Raynolds, a devoutly religious man, spent the Christmas holiday with these

missionaries in 1859, and gave them financial and other assistance in pre-

paring for their journey.

Part of the group went on to a point on Powder River, probably some-

where in the vicinity of Dry Fork in the spring of 1860. Here they erected

a building or buildings and commenced farming operations.

But their chosen location was no longer Crow country, for within the

past ten years the Sioux had gained substantial control of the region.

Before the year was out, the leader of the group, Moritz Braueninger was

killed by the Sioux and other men driven away. Several of these mission-

aries remained at Deer Creek for four or five years, learned the Indian

languages, claimed a number of converts and ran a small school that

attracted a few children from the Indians and mixed bloods in that area.



NOTES ON PART V.

1. This description of jurisdictional changes is drawn from the following:  
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3. Larson, op.cit.
4. Bartlett, op.cit.
5. Larson, op.cit.  
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8. W. W. Witzlizenus, Journey to the Rocky Mountains in the Year 1839, (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society, 1912).
9. Dale Van Every, The Final Challenge: The American Frontier, 1804-1845, (New York: William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1964; Mentor Books reprint, 1965).
10. David Lavender, Westward Vision: The Story of the Oregon Trail, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963, paperback ed., 1971).
11. Ibid., p. 381.
12. Merrill J. Mattes, The Great Platte River Road, (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1969).
13. Aubrey L. Haines, Historic Resources Study: Historic Sites Along the Oregon Trail, (Denver, Colorado: Denver Service Center, National Park Service, limited Itek Ed., June 1973).
14. ibid;  
also: Paul Henderson Maps, Copies in BLM State Office and in Wyoming State Historic Preservation Officer's Office.
15. Robert A. Murray, Oregon Trail Ruts and Register Cliff, (n.p. National Park Service c. 1963).
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17. Fort Laramie has been very heavily researched and written up over the years. National Park Service historians have wrestled with the extensive documentation of this famous post for over 40 years. Merrill J. Mattes alone has worked with the subject frequently for that length of time. He was among the first to suggest that it be made an NPS area, did the first meaningful federal research on the site, and has served as teacher, guide and inspiration to NPS and other historians since that time. Most of the data in the foregoing brief discussion of Fort John is taken from:

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18. Morgan, op.cit.
19. This elusive post has been mentioned in a wealth of documents, most of which have only come to light in the past 15 years or so. See:  
Robert A. Murray, "Trading Posts, Forts and Bridges of the Casper Area, Unraveling the Tangle on the Upper Platte," Annals of Wyoming, Vol. 47, No. 1, Spring, 1975, pp. 4-30.
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22. H.H. Bancroft, History of California, (Bancroft, San Francisco, Vol. VI,) p. 281.
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24. LeRoy Hafen, The Overland Mail, (Cleveland, Ohio: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1926), p. 54.
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27. House Executive Document No. 96, (35th Congress, 1st Session), p. 353.
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33. U.S. Statutes at Large, Vol. XII, p. 206.  
Hafen, Overland Mail, p. 223.
34. Ibid., p. 223.  
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59. J.H. Snowden, "Report..." in Reynolds, op.cit., pp. 155-160.
60. Reynolds, op.cit.
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62. Robert L. Munkres, "The Plains Indian Threat on the Oregon Trail," in Saleratus and Sagebrush, Wyoming Historical Society, 1975.
63. Copies of depositions from Indian Depredations and Indian Claims Commission Files in the National Archives, in WIS Collections.
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PART VI. A FAST-PACED 15 YEARS, THE INDIAN WARS OF 1862-77.





### THE OLD EMIGRANT TRAIL IN 1862

By the spring of 1862, the old North Platte, Sweetwater route across the continent had reached an advanced state of development as a trail system. We say Trail-system, because it was just that. There were so many variations in the routes according to weather and the inclination of individual bands of emigrants that it is not practicable to describe them in a narrative such as this in detail. The BLM and the Wyoming Recreation Commission both have copies of mapping coverage by Paul Henderson of Bridgeport, Nebraska, representing the culmination of over 40 years of work by him and others on these trails. We have reproduced reductions of these maps that were prepared in a National Park Service project some years ago.

The well-established toll bridges built by Richard in 1853 and by Guinard in 1859, along with the presence of Fort Laramie and the string of stage stations and trading posts, tended to channel the largest traffic volume along the south-side trails up the North Dakota Valley. The stage road, with its stations every few miles was probably the heaviest traveled variant of the old trails. The telegraph line substantially followed this route, and had its stations in the main stage company stations along the trail.

After the withdrawal of troops from Richard's Bridge in the spring of 1859, there were no regulars stationed at any point between Fort Laramie and Fort Bridger on the old trails. Stage stations usually had an agent and some horse-wranglers, sometimes a blacksmith. In most cases, we find the traders and their employees and hangers-on fulfilling these roles.<sup>1</sup> This meant that some of both the advantages and the problems posed by these men's standing relationships to the Indians would be present.

Only two major establishments within our Study Area appear to date purely from the stage line period. These were both built by Louis Guinard, and have been described in "Traders Along the Trails," in the foregoing section of this report.

### OTHER TRAILS

Events through the early 1860's resulted in a major realignment of emigrant traffic through the region. Routes publicized by the army during the Utah Expedition of 1857-58 saw increasing emigrant use (though some of these such as the "Cherokee Trail," had been so used as early as 1849). Most freight traffic was rerouted on these more direct routes in 1858-59.<sup>2</sup>

Gold rush excitement in Colorado brought an eastward flow of prospectors and miners from older gold regions in 1859, and these men generally used the desert routes across southern Wyoming.<sup>3</sup>

#### Impact of the Montana Gold Rush:

The discovery of gold in Montana in 1862 brought a rush of gold-camp people to that country. The bulk of these came from Idaho, where several gold rushes in the Oro Fino, the Boise Basin and elsewhere had just began to simmer down. Others came from California, Nevada, Oregon and other western gold rush area. Most of these came to Montana over trails from the west and southwest.<sup>4</sup>

They were joined by men from the Colorado gold country. Such prospectors generally followed the Cherokee route to Green River and then went by one of several trails northwest to enter western Montana from the South.<sup>5</sup>

The largest volume of supplies came to Montana by water, considerable quantities coming up the Missouri to landings such as Fort Benton, Cow Island Landing and Carroll. Other large quantities came up the Columbia and the Clarks Fork. Light freight and express came across Wyoming on the Overland Route (across the southern part of the state), then branched off in Utah for the haul to Montana.<sup>6</sup>

#### The Bozeman Trail:

Some of the eastward-moving frontier population of Montana by 1863 settled in the Gallatin Valley. Among them was John M. Bozeman, experienced as a prospector, but more inclined to be as he characterized himself, a "speculator".

He actively promoted settlement in the Gallatin and in the town that was soon named after him. In 1863, he and another Montanan, John Jacobs set out to pioneer a wagon-route to connect Bozeman and the Montana mining country more directly to the States, and in effect to change Bozeman from a back door to a front door for the territory. About the only thing original about their scheme was publicity for linking up the long-known Indian, trapper and explorer trails that fronted the Big Horns into a single route that could bring wagons from the Oregon Trail to the eastern foot of Bozeman Pass without traversing

the mountains as was necessary on most alternative land routes. Bozeman himself was more interested in attracting agricultural settlers than in luring in any more prospectors for gold.<sup>7</sup>

In its first years, this "Bozeman Trail" as it came to be called, departed from the North Platte River at John Richard's well-established toll bridge and trading post that offered a safe river crossing and a good outfitting point. From here it angled northeast over the hills to avoid the rougher country along Salt Creek. At Brown's Springs it turned northwest again, and crossed the little streams that formed the heads of the Cheyenne River drainage. Reaching Dry Fork of Powder River, the trail ran down that wash to the Powder, crossed the river and headed northwest up Soldier Creek to the divide overlooking Crazy Woman Creek. Crossing that stream at a point soon to be well-known, it continued northwest to Clear Fork along the approximate route taken by Reynolds on his return from the Big Horn River country in 1859. It then crossed Piney Creek and took a northwesterly track again, paralleling the northeast face of the Big Horns at sufficient distance to pass through the trough created by erosional degradation of the interstream divides of the main streams coming off the Big Horns. It crossed Prairie Dog Creek, the Little Goose, Big Goose, Wolf Creek and Tongue River, passed over a low divide to Pass Creek and the Little Horn out of our Study Area. Ultimately it crossed the Big Horn and Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone, then the Yellowstone itself to head over Bozeman Pass into the Gallatin Valley. It is important to note that the importance of this route had been anticipated in part by Reynolds in 1859, and in its upper end by Clark in 1806.<sup>8</sup>

The "Bozeman Trail" could not possibly compete as a general purpose commercial route, since it involved a total wagon haul of over a thousand miles from Independence or from Omaha. Average prices for freight of any kind would run over 25¢ per hundred pounds, and later army studies indicated loss and damage rates of as much as 50% for hauls of this kind in such a region. The rivers could bring freight far inland very cheaply for a total delivered rate of from 6¢ to 10¢ per pound with loss and damage at 10% or less.<sup>9</sup>

What was the appeal of this Bozeman Trail, then? For one thing, it could be a feasible route for the small farmer or rancher, ideal customers for the first on the scene land speculators like Bozeman. It might have political implications, too, in a territory that hoped for the quick increase in voting power that could hasten statehood.<sup>10</sup>

Bozeman attempted to pilot one train up his trail in 1863. This, the Samuel Word train, ran into hostile Indians in some force at Clear Fork of Powder river. Here they turned back to go on to Montana by other routes.

Four wagon trains went through to Montana over the Bozeman Trail in 1864. One of these, the Townsend Trail had a sharp fight with Sioux and Cheyenne Indians on the banks of Soldier Creek, three miles northwest of the Dry Fork crossing of Powder River.

Very few civilian parties went over the trail in 1865, either.<sup>11</sup>

#### The Bridger Trail:

Directly competitive to Bozeman's trail was one laid out by Jim Bridger in the same year. The Bridger route left the North Platte River by either Richard's or Guinard's bridge, ran over the hills to Poison Spider Creek, and up that drainage over the hills to the northwest and out across the desert to an easy gradient pass through the south-end of the Big Horns. Thence it crossed the Big Horn Basin and joined Bozeman's route on Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone. Most of this route lies outside our present Study Area. Its primary importance here lies in its direct competition to Bozeman's route.

The main advantage of the Bridger Trail lay in the fact that for almost its entire length it ran through country which in the 1860's was dominated by the more-or-less friendly Shoshoni and Crow Indians, avoiding much probability of contact with the more troublesome Sioux, Cheyenne and Arapaho.

As a deterrent to its use, the route ran through country with little useable water for about a hundred miles before reaching the Big Horn River. Grazing conditions for draft stock were poor all the way to the crossing of Clark's Fork.

Very few emigrant parties passed over the Bridger Trail, but then very few passed over the Bozeman Trail either, so arguments over relative importance of the routes are pretty academic.<sup>12</sup>



## PROTECTION OF TRAVEL AND OF COMMUNICATIONS LINES

The first movement of troops into Wyoming in response to incidents with the Indians brought in a company of Utah militia in the spring of 1862. These men, mustered in for 90 days service, garrisoned Fort Bridger and the stage stations at Green River Ferry, Pacific Springs, South Pass Station, and Three Crossings.<sup>13</sup> They were withdrawn when other troops could be brought to replace them.

Their replacements came to the West as the first of eastern Civil War enlistees to do so. This unit was the 2nd Battalion, 6th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry. Recruited to fight in the Civil War, they soon found themselves marching westward to protect the Pacific Telegraph.

Commanded by Lt. Col. William O. Collins, the unit was largely recruited from the Hillsboro/Denison area of Ohio. Like most early Civil War units the men were acquainted with each other from civilian life, and many elements of home-town politics and a general air of "amateurism" pervaded their operations and training.<sup>14</sup>

Collins came to Fort Laramie and set up his main headquarters there in June of 1862. Shortly thereafter he made a reconnaissance in force up the trail to South Pass and at least as far as Pacific Springs by June 20 and scouted over into the Wind River country.<sup>15</sup>

He arranged for the removal of the stage company personnel and stock to the Overland Route. There is no indication that he immediately garrisoned points along the line, but the records do show that by early fall of 1862 he had troops stationed at Guinard's Bridge on the Platte, at Sweetwater Station, and that he eventually placed a handful of men at each telegraph station thorough the study area.<sup>16</sup>

There was not really much trouble along the line until 1864 and peak military activity did not develop until 1865.

It is important to realize that activities of Collins unit were conditioned by the changing situation on the Civil War operations front in Missouri. We have examined a wealth of military correspondence on the whole region. It is evident that every time the Union Forces on the Missouri/Arkansas front needed more men, they drew down a few from the east end of the telegraph line and emigrant trails. In response, Collins strung his forces out eastward to fill the gap. Correspondingly, the California, Nevada and Utah troops who handled the country beyond Green River often extended their operations down the line to relieve Collins men in this thermometric response



to conditions in "The War."<sup>17</sup>

Lt. Col. Collins went east in the summer of 1863, recruited additional men, and brought them back to the west to reorganize his unit as a new regiment, the 11th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry. One of the new recruits was Collins' son, Lt. Caspar Collins, who had earlier accompanied the first move west as a civilian.

Caspar Collins commanded a detachment of troops at Sweetwater Station and was responsible for details stationed at points up the line as far as Pacific Springs in late 1864 and into 1865.<sup>18</sup>

These small isolated stations with their handfuls of inexperienced soldiers proved tempting to the Indians, and we suspect that the presence of such small forces at the stations only intensified and complicated the Indian warfare along the trails that had been fairly peaceful for travelers before 1862.<sup>19</sup>

As the pace of hostilities stepped up along the main trails to the far west in 1864, new units were sent in to back up the 11th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry. These included the elements of Sixteenth Kansas Volunteer Cavalry, and the Seventh Iowa Volunteer Cavalry.

Notwithstanding the additional forces in the area, Indian trouble persisted along the trails. There were several reasons for this: First, even with the additional manpower, garrisons were too small to form effective striking forces that could be their very presence have a deterrent effect. Second, beyond the main garrison points, many men were strung out by threes, fives and tens at the small intermediate telegraph stations along the trail through our Study Area, and along the Overland Stage Route to the south. As the Ohio men had from the first, these men tended to straggle out on the chores of getting wood and water, to wander about hunting, and in general pose tempting targets of opportunity for wandering Indian war parties. And third, there were external pressures upon the region that tended to stir up the Indians more than they had been at an earlier date.<sup>20</sup>

First, and getting some immediate blame for the situation was the uprising of reservation Sioux in Minnesota in 1862. During 1863, massive punitive expeditions pushed out from the Minnesota frontier and also up the Missouri and into eastern Dakota. Sioux refugees from Dakota scattered over the northern prairies to seek protection in the camps of their distant relatives. Other bands of Minnesota Sioux were forcibly relocated in the Missouri River by the army. In the pursuit of the fleeing Sioux from Minnesota, it became increasingly difficult to tell friendlies from hostiles.

General Alfred Sully carried the war west of the Missouri in 1864, passing among and fighting northern Sioux tribes that had no history of organized hostility to the government. By 1863, all the buffalo east of the Missouri River were gone, largely as a result of hunting pressure by the eastern Sioux bands who had driven other tribes from the region. While some of the eastern bands settled down at the new agencies on the banks of the Missouri, the more dissident individuals and bands scattered through the now hostile northern Sioux tribes.<sup>21</sup>

More directly important to the events that followed was the situation in Colorado, and in Western Kansas. There, the Cheyennes and Arapahoes had become involved in the same pattern of hit and run raids on stage stations, road ranches and isolated farms on the frontier that characterized Sioux, Ute and Shoshoni activity in Wyoming. But with the critical difference that they did so in close proximity to a tough, resourceful and well-organized mining population.

In the fall of 1864, the Colorado Volunteer Cavalry units wiped out a Cheyenne encampment of Sand Creek. Cheyenne survivors fled northward, wreaking death and destruction, and looting at every opportunity.<sup>22</sup>

Thus by the opening week of 1865, it was evident even in Washington that a troublesome year on the plains lay ahead, while the Civil War was still absorbing most of the attention and military resources of the Union.

The year 1865 opened with a series of Indian raids along the South Platte in Colorado. Col. Thomas Moonlight sent in the first reports of this activity from his Denver headquarters on January 11th, saying:

...matters have become very serious. The Indians have attacked Julesburg, Valley Station, and several other points on the Overland Route; murdered men, women and children just as they came; burned trains and houses; driven off stage stock, so that the Overland line is now in their hands, and all mail communication by that route is shut off, and here I am without a man to throw on either track, or even to defend the ranches with...<sup>23</sup>

While this situation was developing, on the existing communications line, another concern of the government was voiced by the Secretary of Interior in a letter to the Secretary of War on January 12th:

I have the honor to call your attention to the necessity that exists for the removal of the Indians who inhabit the country along the valleys of the Platte and Republican Rivers, along one of which the route of the Union Pacific Railroad will pass, in order that the engineers upon that road may prosecute their labors in security, and that the work may progress without danger of interruption as heretofore from the attacks upon the parties engaged, to which they are now and have been exposed in conse-

quence of the disaffection of various tribes along the route... He specifically recommended the reorganization of command in the region and the stationing of General Patrick E. Connor and sufficient troops to bring the situation under control.<sup>24</sup> The seriousness of the situation received emphasis on February 2nd, when 1500 hostile Indians drove a 50 man garrison at Julesburg into its fortifications and kept them pinned down there while the settlement was sacked and the stage station burned to the ground. Over the next few weeks, a flurry of telegrams swept back and forth across the country as various levels of military command worked out approaches to keeping open communications with the Far West.<sup>25</sup> On February 6th, General Grant's Chief of Staff, Major General H.W. Halleck wired to General John Pope in St. Louis:

...General Connor thinks with two additional regiments he can guard the Overland Mail Route as far east as the Big Blue. This arrangement is desired by the Overland Mail Company, and favorably considered by General Grant. District and department lines can be arranged to suit...<sup>26</sup>

That same day, other communications approved the transfer of "two regiments of enlisted rebel deserters", the later well-known "Galvanized Yankees," to the western communication lines, and still other wires noted the fact that troops had relieved the small garrison forced up near Julesburg and reopened the telegraph lines in that area.<sup>27</sup>

Preliminary plans continued to fly back and forth by wire, and Major General Grenville M. Dodge at Fort Leavenworth reported:

I find that there are two separate routes to Salt Lake from Julesburg west. The telegraph route by way of Fort Laramie and the mail route by way of Cache la Poudre, Bridger's Pass, etc. Both of the routes have troops stationed along them, making two weak lines instead of one strong one. All stages go guarded from station to station, and am told that they are running regularly.

Connor evidently proposed stationing eight or ten men at each stage station, but Dodge countered that this would not work "as it would only be bait to the Indians. I think our troops should be kept at the forts and guards furnished the stages from one fort to another...."<sup>28</sup>

In addition to the "Galvanized Yankees" other units were ordered west on the communication lines, including the 11th and 16th Kansas Volunteer Cavalry. Their place on the Kansas frontier was taken by the Third Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry, withdrawn from the fringes of the Civil War combat area in western Arkansas. Dodge issued orders that



At all times the Overland mail will be so protected as to insure its safety, escorts running from one military post to another.... Sudden dashes of Indians is no cause for stopping or turning back of mails, as the moment the Indians are driven off they can be pushed through ....<sup>29</sup>

Lt. Col. William O. Collins, with almost three years of experience in dealing with the Indians of the region supplied a lengthy report on February 15, 1865, in the course of which he said:

...the permanent cure for the hostilities of the Northern Indians is to go into the heart of their buffalo country and hold forts until the trouble is over. A hasty expedition, however successful, is only a temporary lesson, whereas the presence of troops in force in the country where the Indians are compelled to live and subsist would soon oblige them to sue for peace and accept such terms as the government may think proper to impose....There are two points I would respectfully indicate as suitable locations for the posts spoken of, one about the head of the Little Missouri of the Mandans, near the Three Buttes, and the other at some proper place on Powder River.<sup>30</sup>

His recommendations clearly affected army planning for the region for the next three years.

In the ensuing correspondence, one officer said "Where is Powder River, and how far from Julesburg," an indication of the difficulty the Civil War army was experiencing in reorienting itself toward western problems.<sup>31</sup>

But Connor, a seasoned old westerner, had no such limitations to his vision. He moved east as ordered, visited Fort Laramie and Denver and points along the communication lines, and swiftly formulated plans for a major punitive campaign into the hostile country. His own campaign against the Shoshonis and Bannocks in 1863 had taken the pressure of these tribes off the communication lines in Idaho and Utah, and he fully expected that he could do the same thing on the larger scale of plains operations.<sup>32</sup>

But to do so required extensive preparations. While these were going on, the pace of hostilities speeded up.

In May of 1865, a few horses were stolen up and down the telegraph line. On the 27th of that month, hostiles drove off the garison of the telegraph station at St. Marys and set fire to the buildings.

In early February, Indians attacked the station at Mud Springs (some distance down the line in Nebraska). Col. Collins marched to its relief and fought a sharp skirmish at Rush Creek.

In the spring and early summer, Col. Thomas Moonlight at Fort Laramie received almost constant reports of various levels of depredations. When two Sioux, Black Foot and Two Face, brought a white woman captive into the post

in the hope of reward or ransom, Moonlight summarily hanged them as an example to the tribes.

While Connor planned campaign details, Moonlight then rushed off on two successive small scale attempts at a punitive expedition of his own. On the last, terminating at Dead Man's Fork, Moonlight and his men lost the bulk of their horse-herd to Sioux raiders and trugged wearily back to the fort.<sup>33</sup>

In July, the Cheyennes and Sioux destroyed an army wagon train within sight of Platte Bridge Station. Young lieutenant Caspar Collins dashed out with a small force in a rescue attempt, and was killed while attempting to retreat to the post.<sup>34</sup>

Connor then reenforced the stations along the line with elements of the U.S. Volunteer units while behind this screen he continued to assemble his main striking force of cavalry and mounted infantry units.<sup>35</sup>

While Connor's initial moves were centered around improving immediate protection for the existing communication lines, he soon began to develop plans in response to the Secretary of War's letter of January 12th, cited above.

To accomplish a military solution to the Indian problem in his command in one season, Connor envisioned a need for 20,000 men. Retrospectively, this is probably a reasonable estimate. It may not have seemed exorbitant to officers used to hearing daily news of a Union army that was one of the largest ever assembled in the world. But Indian fighting had to stand in its own context, politically and logistically. As the major campaigns against the South drew to a close that spring, the volunteer units expected to go home quickly. The very method of their organization during the war assured quick access to political support, once their task against the Confederacy was completed. Mustering out was a process well begun by mid summer.

Most of the transportation equipment the Army owned lay in depots far from the western frontier.

Connor continued with his plans for a multi-pronged sweep through the hostile Indian country north of the Platte. When his men were finally assembled at their jump-off points, he had just over 2,000 to work with instead of the greater number he had hoped for. Colonel Nelson Cole took one column up through western Nebraska, around the east and north sides of the Black Hills and into Southeastern Montana. Colonel Samuel Walker took a smaller column north out of Fort Laramie. Connor himself took a large column up the Bozeman Trail, with a scouting party out to the left, working the country north of Fort Caspar.

Walker's column carried part of its supplies in wagons, but depended too

heavily on pack transportation. They pushed north from Fort Laramie, crossed the various headwaters of the Niobrara and the Cheyenne, crossed the Belle Fourche and the Little Missouri, and made their way on into Montana where they joined forces with Cole on Powder River and fought several significant engagements against the Sioux.

The combined column then trudged up Powder River, scouting to the west to try to find Connor. Long out of forage their animals grew weaker by the day, and an early September storm killed over 400 head of horses and mules on their picket lines.

Connor in the meantime had moved up the Bozeman Trail to a point about three miles below the mouth of Dry Fork on Powder River. Here, on a terrace about 60 feet above the river level, he left a contingent of infantrymen to build one of the forts recommended by Col. Collins. They named their post Fort Connor.

The main column then moved off up the Bozeman Trail toward Tongue River. Scouts located a sizeable camp of the Arapahoes on that stream near the site of present Ranchester. On August 29, 1865, Connor struck this camp, inflicted heavy casualties on the Indians, captured their pony herd and destroyed their camp equipment and supplies.

Then Connor moved out down Tongue River into Montana, scouting for Cole and Walker's columns. Ultimately he made contact with them, and pointed them toward Fort Connor to be resupplied.

At this point, Connor received orders to terminate the expedition. Quartermaster cost accountants had discovered that the cost of transportation alone was running a million dollars a month to keep his 2,000 men in the field!

Connor's campaign along with that of Sully the previous year was a good lesson in western logistic realities and the limitations of wagon and pack transportation for campaigning on the plains.

While Connor's men pushed out into the Indian Country, another column made its way westward up the Niobrara River. This was the wagon road expedition of civilian contractor James Sawyers, an Iowa politician.

Sawyers had his own force of mapping and surveying personnel, some laborers to make minor road improvements and a light infantry guard. They were accompanied by some emigrants and a merchant who wanted to take advantage of the military escort to reach Montana.

They came into Wyoming on the headwaters of the Niobrara, and then headed northwest across the various headwaters of the South Cheyenne and onto the high divide between it and the Belle Fourche.



They then sought to find an easy gradient route down to Powder River. Their first try took them across the Belle Fourche at the mouth of Caballo Creek, then west out across the prairie for some distance. Short of water, they retreated toward Caballo Creek, when they were attacked by Indians. They fortified up their wagons at one place, and then ultimately retreated to higher ground, where they buried two of their men, killed in the fight.

Then they made their way back to the divide again and went west past Pumpkin Buttes to Powder River.

At Fort Connor, Sawyers column picked up the Bozeman Trail and followed it to the Tongue River country. Here they came down to Tongue River in the trail of Connor's column, some miles to the east of the Bozeman road proper. They likely did this simply because it was the best road down the freshest track they could have found that season.

In mapping out his road, Sawyers laid it out over the easiest track west from the headwaters of the Cheyenne and avoided the detour that had involved their fight west of Caballo Creek.

The following year, in 1866, Sawyers took another column out over the route and made some grade improvements. At this time he made a side trip to the old fight site and retrieved the remains of his men.

This was the last wagon train over the Sawyers route. Well publicized Indian troubles and the availability of better routes to Montana, along with the existence of military posts on the BOzeman Trail kept travel off the Sawyers Route, and so far as we know it was never again used as a continuous route of travel.<sup>36</sup>

On his withdrawal, Connor left a small garrison at Fort Connor, consisting of companies C and D, 5th U.S. Volunteers, and Company A "Omaha Scouts" (actually Winnebagoes) a Nebraska Volunteer unit. In November of 1865, they received orders redesignating their post "Fort Reno." This in honor of General Jesse L. Reno, killed in the battle of SOutH Mountain during the Civil War.

The winter of 1865-66 was a winter of relative quiet along the trails. As usual, the Indians settled down in their winter camps to wait out the bad weather, generally well-supplied with dried meat, berries and other staples.<sup>37</sup>

In the spring of 1866, with the railroad pushing westward at better than a mile a day across Nebraska, the government launched a double effort to keep the Indians occupied with events well away from the line of projected rail construction across Wyoming. Most of the important activity in both phases of the work occurred within our Study Area. First, peace feelers were sent

out to the tribes, with promises of much talk and many presents at Fort Laramie that summer. Simultaneously plans were set in motion to phase out the use of volunteer troops in the region during the year and to set up strong garrisons of regulars along the trails and in the Indian country to the north.<sup>38</sup>

Key to this effort was to be the 18th U.S. Infantry.

The 18th had been organized in the early Civil War expansion of the regular army. Its Colonel from the first was Henry B. Carrington, an Ohio lawyer and politician who received this commission largely as a result of his efforts on behalf of the Republican Party in that state in 1856 and in 1860. Early in the war, Carrington was detailed to the staff of the Governor of Indiana, where he headed up intelligence and secret police activities in that State during the war.<sup>39</sup>

While Carrington was thus employed, the regiment, under a series of temporary commanders, fought through some of the hardest campaigns of the war, and suffered heavy casualties. The commissioned officers of the unit who survived the War found little in common with the textbook soldier and politician who resumed command when they came back from the front lines with war's end. In the fall of 1865 and early 1866, many of them were detailed to other duties, a not-uncommon situation for regular units of a period when occupation duty in the South, manning of coastal fortifications, and a show of force on the Mexican border made heavy demands on an army that daily diminished in strength as the volunteer units disbanded and went home.

Most of the combat-seasoned regular enlisted men of the 18th had had quite enough of the army by the end of the war, and only a handful of the most hard-bitten old professionals stayed with the outfit. The vacancies were filled up by recruitment of new immigrants and of town and country boys who were receptive to tales of army life told by fathers, uncles and brothers who had served through the war. They were to find regular service in the West a whole new game that did not match up to the easy-going and highly political volunteer service of wartime.

Carrington's unit marched west from Fort Leavenworth in the fall of 1865 to winter at Fort Kearny on the Platte in Nebraska. They started up-country in the spring of 1866, with enlisted men deserting in droves as they neared the turn off toward the mining country of Colorado. Once across the South Platte, desertions diminished through the increased danger Indians posed to potential stragglers.<sup>40</sup>

The column reached Fort Laramie with most unfortunate timing, just as negotiations with the Sioux were reaching a peak. There have been a number of

rather dramatic accounts of the situation, but the presence of a strong force of regulars headed for the posts up the Platte and on up the Bozeman trail convinced many of the Sioux of government duplicity. Had they understood that the whole scenario was a sideshow to draw them away from the lines of rail survey and construction they might have still more recalcitrant!<sup>41</sup>

The 18th was organized on a 3-battalion pattern that gave it greater strength numerically than the old regular army infantry regiments. In the west it was split up, with each of the battalions assigned to a different operational sector. The First Battalion strung out from Fort Caspar down the Platte to Fort Laramie and on down the trails into Nebraska. The THird Battalion had parted from the regiment on the South Platte to march up country to the west and build Fort John Buford (soon renamed Fort Sanders) at the crossing of the Laramie, to protect the stage line and to garrison Fort Bridger, far to the West. The 2nd Battalion, along with the Regimental Headquarters Staff and the Regimental Band remained under the personal command of Carrington.

The Second Battalion was assigned to garrison the newly created "Mountain District, of the Department of the Platte." Their initial assignment was to march up the Bozeman Trail, replacing volunteer units at Camp Marshall and at Fort Reno. At the outset the plan was to draw the stores from Fort Reno and abandon that point, building a "New Fort Reno" at some point to be chosen in the country beyond Powder River, and then building a post at the Big Horn River crossing of the Bozeman Trail and another post where the trail crossed the Yellowstone.

Their mission was essentially to constitute a show of force right through the heart of the Indian country. Montanans were pleased at this support for emigration on the Bozeman Trail. At the same time, Carrington was cautioned not to start a "general Indian war."

Carrington relieved the U.S. Volunteers at Camp Marshall; but concluded their force would be better used at Bridger's Ferry. Moving on up country, they reached Fort Reno late in June.

Carrington encountered his first hostiles there, when they ran off the post trader's herd in broad daylight and easily outdistanced pursuit by his "mounted detachment."

The 18th left a company here to guard the extensive collection of supplies left by the departing Connor column the previous fall. Then they marched on up the trail in front of the Big Horns, reaching Piney Creek on July 13th. Here, while the bulk of the command rested in this attractive setting, Carrington



and his staff, accompanied by his guides and interpreters and led by old Jim Bridger, made a reconnaissance of alternative sites as far northwest as Tongue River. Returning late on the 14th, he concluded that none of the sites appealed to him so much as this one, so on July 15th he surveyed the site for his new headquarters post. Soon word arrived that he was to not only start this post, but to keep Fort Reno active. So he sent an additional company back to Fort Reno and pushed a strong force forward to build Fort C.F. Smith on the Big Horn. The projected post on the Yellowstone was delayed while Carrington appealed for still more troops.

Encouraged by the presence of troops, a very few emigrant trains did go through to the Gallatin Valley that summer, as well as Nelson Story's fabled herd of beef steers for the markets of the mining camps. But, realistically, there was not actually much demand for such a route, due to its position in relation to the flow of persons to the Montana country, and the superiority of the river routes for freight.

Throughout the fall, working parties out away from the posts, small parties on the trail, and pickets on the high points near Fort Phil Kearny were repeatedly harrassed by Indian raiders. Carrington had a large force of civilian contractors cutting construction timber and stockpiling firewood and hay. He had virtually his entire garrison force of enlisted men doing construction work.

Despite the untrained and inexperienced enlisted men that filled the ranks, Carrington and his staff carried on no significant training that fall. Only through fruitless and hectic pursuits of small raiding parties did any of his men gain experience against the Indians.

Carrington received a contingent of cavalry in the fall, in the form of an under strength company of untrained recruits designated as Company C., 2nd U.S. Cavalry. Like many other units in the west, these men had never seen their nominal commander (Captain Wesley Merritt, Brevet Major General U.S.A.), for he was on leave awaiting the activation of a new unit in which he could assume a higher grade commission. They had only young, likeable and almost equally inexperienced command in the form of Lt. Horatio S. Bingham.<sup>42</sup>

Carrington did not handle the responsibilities of command at all well. He assigned officers to tasks that he thought would broaden their experience instead of to those they could carry off well. When they failed, he often assumed those responsibilities himself. Under increasing pressure in his effort to complete a major defensive bastion by winter, he still found time to interfere in the internal management of the post and the companies of the

garrison. Both the unit's discipline and morale and Carrington's mental stability progressively deteriorated as the fall wore on.<sup>43</sup>

At the same time, pleasant fall weather gave the Indians time not only to stock up meat and other staples for winter, but to gather in their winter camps and plan larger-scale harassment for the troops that had proven so awkward all fall.

The men of the Fort Phil Kearny garrison fought a disorganized battle with about 300 Sioux on December 6th, 1866. Led into rough ground and thrown off balance by this number, Carrington began to perceive the hazards of such pursuits. But by this time some of his most experienced officers had little confidence in his judgement,

Sent out to relieve an apparently minor attack on a wood train on the morning of December 21st, Captain William J. Fetterman let Indian decoys lead his mixed infantry and cavalry force over the hills and into rough ground beyond reach of help. Here several thousand Indians lay in ambush and they made short work of Fetterman and his men. The 82 men killed here constituted the largest disaster the regular army had suffered in over twenty years of fighting Indians west of the Mississippi River.<sup>44</sup>

Carrington's two civilian messengers, John "Portugee" Phillips and Daniel Dixon, carried Carrington's panic plea for reinforcements to the telegraph line at Horseshoe station for dispatch to the Department headquarters in Omaha. Alarmed by the news they carried, Lt. Col. Henry W. Wessells at Fort Reno sent his own messages to Colonel I.N. Palmer (2nd Cavalry) in command at Fort Laramie. Palmer followed up with his own plea for reinforcements, since along the Platte not far away were Indians wintering that might exceed the force that had overrun Fetterman's men.<sup>45</sup>

In a conveniently timed reorganization dictated by the previous summer's Army appropriation bill, the units in the region were realigned. Carrington was transferred first to Fort Caspar and then to Fort McPherson, Nebraska. Palmer remained in command at Fort Laramie, but Lt. Col. Wessells was assigned at his brevet rank of Brigadier General to command the posts in the Mountain District. Brigadier General Philip St. George Cooke was transferred to staff assignments elsewhere, and replaced in command of Department of the Platte by Brigadier General C.C. Augur.<sup>46</sup>

Augur's correspondence reveals preliminary plans for a punitive campaign against the hostiles in which Generals Sherman and Grant concurred. Such plans, however ran into several obstacles. First, there was the primary responsibility to protect the communication lines, and the railroad, with

the line already built into the fringes of hostile country in western Nebraska. Then there was the serious problem of logistic support so long as that depended on wagons. Then, on top of this, Congress made a further commitment toward negotiation with the tribes.<sup>47</sup>

The 1867 operations then combined a holding action along the Bozeman Trail and the communication lines with strong protection for railroad survey grading and construction crews. Fort Laramie was the center for negotiations that tied up a substantial number of Indians in its own way.

By early summer the new Colonel of the 27th U.S. Infantry, John E. Smith, arrived to command operations along the Bozeman Trail.

The trail itself changed somewhat in the foregoing period. Where in Bozeman's time, emigrant traffic crossed at Richard's Bridge and headed north-east to Brown's Springs, during the Carrington period military and other traffic crossed at Bridger's Ferry and followed the north bank of the river to Sage Creek to head north at that point. Now, in the spring of 1867 a new cut-off developed from Bridger's ferry straight across the hills to Sage Creek. In the middle reaches of the trail the presence of Fort Reno led most traffic to turn off some distance up Dry Fork and head overland three miles to the good crossing just below Fort Reno, rather than using the treacherous Dry Fork Crossing in high water.<sup>48</sup>

Colonel Smith and many of his officers were skilled and experienced men. They quickly whipped the green units under their command into shape. Resounding army victories in the Wagon Box Fight near Fort Phil Kearny and at the Hayfield Fight near Fort C.F. Smith in early August of 1867 did much to restore morale among the garrisons in the region.

The well-disciplined regulars of this period moved up and down the trails as they needed to in the course of keeping their forces ready for action and their communications open.<sup>49</sup>

They were relieved of one task in late summer of 1867, when the Pacific Telegraph Company completed its own line across southern Wyoming parallel to a competing line that had been built up out of Colorado in 1866. In September they discontinued service on the old line and turned it over to the Army.

The Army cut the line about 8 miles west of LaPrele Creek, Fort Fetterman, a new post at the mouth of that creek and swung the line in to terminate. Personnel were withdrawn from the west end of the line.<sup>50</sup> Fort Caspar was abandoned and dismantled, with its buildings salvaged for reassembly



at Fort Fetterman. Fort Laramie was reenforced and expanded.<sup>51</sup>

From a wintering point at the new city of Cheyenne in 1867, the railroad moved swiftly over the mountains to Fort Sanders the next spring and pushed out across the desert to a new post, Fort Fred Steele by mid-summer. With the railroad past the point of danger during its construction phase, and now in itself a major logistic and troop movement resource, the government was in a very different posture for its negotiations with the Indians in 1868.<sup>52</sup>

Ostensibly a concession to the Indians to secure final approval of the proposed treaty, the withdrawal of troops from the three Bozeman Trail posts that summer marked the beginning of a whole new era in the control of the hostile tribes that remained in the northern Great Plains.

Basically, there was not yet sufficient population pressure to require their removal to reservations to open up this region for settlement. There was no doubt that there would one day be support for this move, but in the interim, it was possible to simply contain the hostiles in a region bounded by the North Platte on the South, the Big Horn Mountains and the Montana settlements on the West, the Missouri on the North, and the middle reaches of the Missouri on the East. New posts along the river, on the eastward-facing Montana frontier, and the new post at Fort Fetterman plus a beefed-up Fort Laramie all demonstrated that the Indians were penned in to a last hunting ground. Even there they were not secure, for the portion of the country comprising the greater part of our present Study Area, west of the Dakota reservation boundaries was reserved for them to hunt on (not to own) and only so long as the buffalo remained there in sufficient numbers to justify the chase."<sup>53</sup>

For the next few years, Fort Laramie and Fort Fetterman were northward facing bastions that kept watch on the Indian country and interdicted Indian movements south of the North Platte River.

To supply these posts efficiently, new wagon routes were developed from the Union Pacific. The supplies for Fort Laramie came from Cheyenne Depot (adjacent Fort D.A. Russell) northward over an old trail that probably originated with the "Taos Lightning" traders like the Richard boys twenty years or more before. Supplies for Fort Fetterman most often were offloaded from the cars at Medicine Bow Station or at Rock River. From these points on the Laramie Plain, trails merged to run down an easy-gradient fault block valley that slices through the Laramie Range directly toward Fort Fetterman. Some supplies were freighted over a new trail that branched off from the Fort

Laramie road on the Chugwater to roughly parallel present I25 to LaPrele.<sup>54</sup>

From 1868-1872, the Indian Bureau maintained Red Cloud Agency for the Ogalala Sioux at a point on the north bank of the North Platte River about 30 miles east of Fort Laramie, and just inside the Wyoming line. In 1872 the Ogalalas were removed for one winter to an agency on the Missouri River, and then settled at a new agency in northwestern Nebraska.<sup>55</sup>

There was only desultory interest in the part of the Study Area north of the North Platte River for a few years. Cheyenne promoters tried to launch an expedition to prospect the Big Horn Mountains in 1869, but were warned away by the government. Likewise, Sioux City and Yankton promoters talked, but only talked about the Black Hills.<sup>56</sup>

In nearby Nebraska, settlers pushed out along the rail line up the Platte Valley, and cattlemen filled up the tall grass prairies and began to move onto the buffalo grass range. Similarly, some range cattle grazed around Cheyenne. To the north, contract beef herds for Fort Laramie and for Red Cloud Agency proved the suitability of the North Platte and the Chugwater valleys for wintering stock.<sup>57</sup>

Occasional Indian raiding parties still came south of the river, but were harassed by pursuing troops alerted by telegraph messages over the lines connecting the posts.<sup>58</sup>

A new military telegraph line from Cheyenne to Fort Laramie went into use in the winter of 1868, and the old line remained in service to Fort Fetterman.<sup>59</sup>

Early in 1874, a small war party of Sioux ambushed young Lieutenant L.H. Robinson near the Fort Laramie sawmill camp in the Laramie Range. There were other evidences of continued hostility before that year was far along. Dissident Sioux demonstrated violently at Red Cloud Agency and their agent called for help. Colonel John E. Smith took a strong force, the "Sioux Expedition" out from Fort Laramie through the eastern fringe of the Study Area on the old Fort Pierre trail, and established a strong military post "Camp Robinson," at Red Cloud Agency, and another "Camp Sheridan," some miles to the east of Spotted Tail Agency.<sup>60</sup>

### THE GOLD MINING INDUSTRY CONTEXT OF THE BLACK HILLS BOOM

The Black Hills gold rush was one of the last big gold mining rushes of classic pattern in the contiguous U.S. territory in the 19th Century. Since so many of its participants were veterans of other such boom developments, it seems important to examine the context of western gold mining as it existed in 1874:

The lure of precious metals formed one of the first inducements to exploration in the age of discovery. With the conquest of the West Indies, and more significantly with the harvest of accumulated treasures in Mexico and in Peru, it became for a long period the primary reason for many explorations in the New World. The mines of Mexico and the Andes continued under Spanish rule to pour out their trains of treasure.<sup>61</sup>

Settlers of the French and English colonies further north soon accepted disappointment in their search for mineral wealth, and settled down to more routine economic activity. The most significant exception for years was the rediscovery of Indian-worked gold placers in the southern Appalachians in 1793. Compared to Latin American mines, the initial yield was small. In 1829 a real rush occurred and by 1866 the region had poured an estimated 20 million dollars into the nation's currency and commerce.<sup>62</sup> More significantly, it led to the displacement of the Cherokee and other Indians in an epic clash between the Supreme Court and the President.<sup>63</sup>

More immediately important to the American West was the practical training many Georgians acquired in the prospecting and exploitation of placer deposits. Georgians figure prominently in most of the landmark discoveries of placer gold in the West. The techniques of the western prospector and the placer miner derive from a combination of Georgian and Mexican practices.<sup>64</sup>

The story of gold in the American West begins with the discovery of a few flakes of gold in a mill race under construction at Johann Sutter's colony of New Helvetia along the Sacramento River in January of 1848. Significantly, the discoverer, James W. Marshall, and others present including Isaac Humphreys (who did the first "panning" there) had some experience in the Appalachian gold fields.

The detailed story of the exploitation of the California gold fields provided sufficient historical accounts to fill a substantial library. Most significant to our story here, however, is the fact that the California gold rush altered the established pattern of exploration and development of the U.S. Frontier. No longer did the frontier push steadily ahead in a wave-like



sequence of economic development of resources. First, a massive wave of emigration moved to California. At its peak, about 50,000 persons a year took the long and difficult covered wagon trip to the California diggings, supplemented by thousands more who made the trip by water.

The first decade of placer mining in California brought the fusion of Appalachian and Mexican work techniques. It also saw the end of easily worked placer deposits that could be worked by the average individual miner. It brought the beginnings of hard-rock gold mining that blended again the Appalachian and Mexican practices with an infusion of technical know-how from Britain and from northern Europe.

The California placer mines during the peak years created a generation of miners and of other specialists supportive to placer mining, and the beginnings of a corps of hard-rock gold miners. As opportunities for individual wealth in California diminished with the exhaustion of easily accessible deposits, many of these men set out to prospect the mountain and basin country that had been skipped over the rush to California. Most of these prospectors and miners radiated out from California. Where they found paying placers, or promising ledges, a new gold rush soon started, repeating all over again the technical, social and economic phenomena of the California Gold Rush on a larger or smaller scale as dictated by the resources that became available. From 1858 to 1890, the mining frontier in the west was not a frontier line in the classic sense, but scattered enclaves of mining settlement. The most primitive were but clusters of prospectors' shacks along some thin-pay placer gulch. The larger ones became complex urban outposts, often isolated hundreds of miles from their main supply bases.

From California, the gold (and silver) seekers moved to the Washoe and Comstock of Nevada, to the Front Range country of Colorado, to northern California, to Oregon, then to Oro Fino, Salmon River and Boise Basin in Idaho, then to Montana, and to parts of Utah.

By the end of the War for Southern Independence of 1865, the major placer deposits in all the above locales were being rapidly exhausted, and mining moved into the high-capital-requirement stage wherever prospects would support it. The placer miners moved on.<sup>65</sup> Soon west-central Wyoming came to their attention. Here, too the "Georgians" and the "Old Californians" played a key role in the discoveries.

Placers and a few promising ledges discovered in the period of 1865-67 brought a massive rush of men to the South Pass country in 1868. Most of the

seasoned old-timers moved on quickly to more profitable ventures like tie-cutting for the Union Pacific, but a few speculators built extensive sets of commercial buildings in South Pass City, and Atlantic City that year, and others freighted in inordinately expensive milling equipment.

By 1872, the boom in the South Pass Country died on the vine. Desultory production followed, but the gross take of the South Pass country in a hundred years amounted to less than 2,000,000 dollars in gold, far below a break-even proposition.<sup>66</sup>

The Big Horns attracted considerable attention in this same period. They were prospected throughly and professionally by parties out of Montana in the summer of 1866, and only the most gullible have taken seriously the talk of gold in the Big Horns since that date.<sup>67</sup>

But the professionals kept looking farther afield from the established camps.

In 1874, the Yellowstone Wagon Road and Prospecting Expedition pushed out of Bozeman, over to and down the Yellowstone to the mouth of the Rosebud, up that stream to have a look at the Wolf Mountains, where the sedimentary exposures and the coal-seam clinker quickly told them all they needed to know.<sup>68</sup>

And then they began to cast eyes upon the Black Hills, cloaked in trapper tales and mystery.

### THE BLACK HILLS GOLD RUSH

There had been rumors of gold in the Black Hills for years, but little solid data to go on. The Warren Expedition, F.V. Hayden's personal expedition, and the Reynolds Expedition, all in the 1850's had only skirted the Hills and delineated their outliers. The Black Hills remained one of the few unstudied and unmapped regions in the American West.

In the spring of 1874, the Government ordered a major scientific expedition into the Hills. The list of specialists in the group reads like a who's who of late 19th Century scientific greats. Their escort, no less than the well-publicized 7th U.S. Cavalry, under the leadership of its flamboyant Lieutenant Colonel, George Armstrong Custer.

The expedition assembled at Fort Abraham Lincoln in Dakota and moved southwest toward the hills in the summer of 1874. Within a short time the news of it brought profoundly altered the history of the region.<sup>69</sup>

Captain William Ludlow, Chief Engineer of the Department of Dakota headed the scientific and technical group that formed the key personnel of the Black Hills Expedition. Assisting him were N.H. Winchell, the State Geologist of Minnesota; George Bird Grinnell, detailed to report on paleontology and zoology for Yale University. William Illingworth, of St. Paul was under contract to document the expedition photographically.

Leaving Fort Abraham Lincoln on July 2nd, 1874, the long column pushed out across the prairies toward the Hills, and passed the Short Pine Hills to reach the Little Missouri, then turned south and crossed the divide to the Belle Fourche where they struck Reynolds 1858 trail, still visible on the ridges, on July 18th.

Winding southward through the hills, they moved up the valley of Red-water creek, a tributary of the Belle Fourche. They camped at Inyan Kara Creek, about 5 miles from the foot of the mountain of that name on July 22nd.

On the 25th, Custer took the column into Floral Valley which they ascended and then crossed over to Castle Valley, naming the topographic features as they went. Prospectors accompanying the expedition now fanned out from each camp to try for placers.

Moving off into Dakota late in July, the party began to find traces of gold on August 2nd. On August 3rd, Custer dispatched civilian guide Charlie Reynolds with messages to be sent from Fort Laramie.

The message Reynolds carried was brief, but its impact must have been fairly predictable, since it contained the key phrase "gold at the grass roots....."



The Black Hills gold rush was one of the last real gold rushes of the classic pattern, with numerous seasoned placer hunters, hard rock prospectors, mining men and all the usual gold-camp-followers crowding in to the Hills. A few prospectors wintered there in the winter of 1874-75, but the first real wave of emigration to the Hills came in the spring of 1875.<sup>70</sup>

Most of the prospective mining region was part of the actual Sioux Reservation under the treaty of 1868. At first, the Government tried to use the army to keep the prospectors out. There were simply not enough troops available to screen off all the possible routes to the hills. Most of this early migration came over easy and relatively short trails from the Missouri River steamboat landings. Some jumped off from the Union Pacific at Sidney, because the Army presence was so strong in Cheyenne and at Fort Laramie and Camp Robinson.<sup>71</sup>

To ascertain more clearly the nature and extent of the gold deposits and their location within the hills, Geologist W.P. Jenney was sent into the region with a sizeable expedition escorted by a force of regulars under command of Major Richard I. Dodge.

The Jenney Expedition pushed into the country along much the same route as the Warren expedition. It camped for a time at Janis's Stockade, a trading post at the site of the LAK Ranch a few miles from present Newcastle. In the light of later prominence of Jenney's party the name "Jenney Stockade" got tacked on to the site and has stuck with local history buffs of that part of the state.

The Jenney party pushed as far north as Inyan Kara, but then explored the southern hills much like the Custer expedition of the year before, and then moved up from creek to creek in the more promising gold fields of Dakota.

Their preliminary findings, along with the work of many prospectors proved that the bulk of available placer gold and virtually all hard-rock deposits lay on the Dakota side of the line.<sup>72</sup> A number of placer claims were laid out in 1876 on the Wyoming side of the line in Bear Gulch and on Sand Creek. Some of these small mining districts were active until the mid 1890's according to district records surviving today.<sup>73</sup>

The really important effects of the Black Hills gold rush upon Wyoming lay in the economic benefits to Cheyenne as a point of departure for gold-seekers coming in from the West by rail, and for the income from serving as a supply point and banking center for the gold country for some time.



The intervening country saw its development accelerated thorough the founding of the Cheyenne/Black Hills stage route, and through supply and support activities in the ensuing Indian campaigns.<sup>74</sup>

Wyoming Black Hills Placers:

Both Sand Creek and Bear Gulch traverse the Dakota/Wyoming line, and on both streams the placer claims extended over into Wyoming. Several mining districts were organized and particularly active in the period of 1876-78, but as elsewhere in the Hills, the placers were worked out fairly quickly. There was some placer activity in both areas intermittently until later dates, however, and the last entires in the mining records that have turned up as a result of our research in Dakota show activity in the early 1890's.<sup>75</sup>

The Wolf Mountain Stampede:

As news and rumors drifted back and forth from camp to camp among the prospectors and placer miners in the Black Hills in 1876, the usual gold-camp phenomena of stampedes to rumored new discoveries became commonplace. One such stampede brought a lot of traffic across the northern part of our Study Area.

After the event it was determined that several speculators bought up a lot of pack animals cheaply from prospectors settled in the Hills, and with a partial corner on this market they then spread rumors of a gold discovery in the Wolf Mountains. One writer describes this as the largest of the stampedes, leading, of course to no gold, due to the lack of appropriate bedrock formations in that whole region. Some of the disappointed prospectors came back to the Hills that fall, some wintered in the Crow country and some went on to the Montana settlements.<sup>76</sup>

THE INDIAN SITUATION 1868 - 1877.





Through the late 1860's, the Sioux pressed still farther west, and extended their raids to the very gates of the Montana settlements. With the garrisons gone from Fort C.F. Smith in Montana, and Fort Phil Kearny and Fort Reno in Wyoming, the Crows withdrew west of the Big Horn River and the Big Horn Mountains.

Sioux, Cheyenne and Arapaho raiders gained substantial control fo the country along the Sweetwater and raided the mining country around South Pass in the late 1860's. They also made horse raids at the Shoshoni camps along Wind River near that tribe's agency.

On the Montana frontier, Sioux raiders made the settlements on the upper Yellowstone, near present Livingston, Montana tenable only at a continuous high risk. Farther north, they raided the fringes of the mining camps east of the Upper Missouri, and swept periodically through the Smith River Valley en route to try for Blackfoot horses,

To meet these threats, the Army built Camp Stambaugh and Camp Brown in Wyoming, and Fort Ellis and Camp Baker in Montana. The Indian Bureau even fortified its agency for the Crows on Mission Creek, not far east of Bozeman Pass, and frontiersmen of the area called it "Fort Parker."

Now it is important to recognize that these raids by the Sioux and their allies were carrying them far beyond the limits to which they had agreed in 1868, and in fact well beyond the open and unceded hunting grounds. Most casualties inflicted by the Sioux and their allies in 1868-75 occurred in areas where the Sioux were not supposed to be. They had by 1870 effectively occupied over half the Crow Reservation, part of the Shoshoni Reservation and raided through the rest of these two reserves!

The Indian Bureau had received frequent reports of the seriousness of the raids by the hostiles.<sup>77</sup>

Captain Bates, operating out of Camp Brown, Wyoming in 1874 made a raid on a large Arapaho camp in the Big Horns, not far outside the west boundary of our Study Area.<sup>78</sup>

Montana merchants and prospectors carried the war to the hostiles in the eastern part of the Crow country in early 1874, when the 150 man Yellowstone Wagon Road and Prospecting Expedition swept through the area with a sizeable wagon train and two artillery pieces. Armed with Montana Militia .50-70's and ammunition, they fought several major pitched battles a matter of 40 miles north of the Wyoming line.<sup>79</sup>

The Montana fronteirsman extended their own operations well down the

Yellowstone in the winter of 1875-76, when a group of traders and wolfers built Fort Pease just below the mouth of the Big Horn, and were constantly harrassed by the Sioux.<sup>80</sup>

The Sioux, Cheyennes and Arapaho made many small raids into the country south of the North Platte, much to the annoyance of the stockmen who were filling up the range in that area, and clamoring for protection.<sup>81</sup>

In actuality, then, the Black Hills gold rush was only the "last straw" so to speak in the desperately strained relations between the government and settlers on the one hand and the Sioux and their allies on the other.

The Indian Bureau concluded that Sioux hostility justified termination of their freedom to roam in the lands west of their reservation. The Bureau wanted them restricted from raiding the friendly tribes to the west.<sup>82</sup> The Army wanted freedom to pursue the hostiles where and when they need to in order to get results.<sup>83</sup>

Frontiersmen and developers and mining interests all wanted the sources of the Black Hills gold discoveries opened for settlement.<sup>84</sup>

Late in the summer of 1875, the government attempted to open negotiations at Red Cloud Agency for the purchase of the Black Hills. This aroused some of the Sioux to near violence on the spot. Other Sioux disagreed and sided with the representatives of the government, perhaps fearing massive retaliation if warfare did break out.<sup>85</sup>

In this tense and dangerous atmosphere, with more miners flocking into the Black Hills daily, high level decision making was called for. So, in November of 1875, at a top level Washington, D.C. meeting, the Indian bureau called for an ultimatum to the roaming bands of Sioux to come in to their reservation by the end of January, 1887, or face the threat of being forcibly rounded up by the Army.

Some of the Sioux did not believe the government seriously meant to undertake a major campaign. Others welcomed the chance for some more good fights, for after all, warfare was an essential part of their way of life. Some may not even have heard of the ultimatum (though this is really a bit difficult to envision). Many probably just procrastinated, in view of the difficulty of leaving comfortable wintering sites in favored country to go to cold and windswept Dakota.<sup>86</sup>

The ultimatum to the Sioux went largely unheeded. The Secretary of the Interior then formally turned the matter over to the Army for a military solution. Plans were set in motion for a spring campaign. A primary planning

handicap lay in the fact that Dakota and Montana were under the jurisdiction of the Department of Dakota, with headquarters in St. Paul, while the major Sioux agencies in the northwest Nebraska and the country between the Black Hills and the Big Horns were part of the Department of the Platte, with headquarters in Omaha.

General Alfred Terry in St. Paul found his campaign planning impeded by the involvement of some of his officers, most notably Custer, in the Belknap hearings over fraudulent management of post traderships. During much of the year, mail and telegraph messages from St. Paul to posts on Montana's eastern frontier had to go by a roundabout route through Salt Lake City.<sup>87</sup>

Brigadier General George Crook, commanding the Department of the Platte had begun campaign preparations with the issuance of the ultimatum to the Indians in late fall, and early asserted his command could move on short notice into the Indian country. When the call came, they proved they could indeed assemble a fast-strike force.

Crook crossed the North Platte River on the ice on March 1st and moved off up the Bozeman Trail. Reaching the Tongue River, they pushed off down that stream into Montana. A part of Crook's force under Colonel J.J. Reynolds and guided by Frank Fruard, found and attacked a sizeable camp of Northern Cheyennes accompanied by a few Sioux on March 17, 1876 at a point on Powder River not far inside the Montana line.

They destroyed the camp, lost the captured pony herd to a Cheyenne counter attack, and made the colossal blunder of burning up the Indian supplies of food along with the camp equipment. After the fight, Crook ordered a withdrawal to Fort Fetterman, for the force had outrun its logistic support and now had none of the hoped-for Indian commissariat to carry on with.<sup>88</sup>

Crook then waited for the northern campaign of General Terry, operating out of Fort Abraham Lincoln, and his subordinate Col. John Gibbon, operating out of Fort Ellis, Montana to develop. Those two forces were converging along the Yellowstone, when Crook's fast-moving column again moved up the Bozeman Trail and effected a junction with Crow and Shoshoni allies in the vicinity of present Sheridan.

Crook's light, fast-strike force of cavalry, mule-mounted Infantry and Indian allies and scouts moved out from his base camp on Goose Creek in mid-June. On the morning of the 17th they were moving along the Rosebud a few miles north of the Wyoming line when about 1,500 Sioux and Cheyenne warriors swept down on the left flank of their column. Crook's men rallied



swiftly behind a screen of Indian allies, and fought an epic all-day battle of charges and counter charges over rough ground. Crook camped on the field counting a victory. The Indians, having fulfilled their desire for a good fight withdrew from the field at nightfall. Both sides were exhausted and nearly out of ammunition. Crook's men had only one days rations in their saddlebags.

On the 18th, Crook pushed back into our Study Area and moved his base camp to a comfortable spot on Little Goose Creek where his men could hunt and fish to supplement their meagre remaining supply of rations and their tired mounts could graze in lieu of forage. rations, while the whole command awaited supply wagons and reenforcements.<sup>89</sup>

Only 8 days after Crook's dramatic fight, Custer blundered into a larger force of Sioux and Cheyennes with his regiment split into four contingents. Custer and five companies of the regiment were overrun and destroyed and the remaining elements corralled for a time by the Sioux.

Early in July, the telegraphed news crackled out over the wires to a nation that was in the midst of its Centennial celebration, centered in a colossal expedition in Philadelphia. Custer's defeat soon stole the front pages. An aroused public now quickly mustered the political support for clearing the northern plains of free-roaming Indians. Now the major portion of our Study Area, long regarded as "Indian Country," would be forcibly opened to settlement.<sup>90</sup>

In this action, the long established bases of Fort Laramie and Fort Fetterman played a key role. Both served as staging areas for the reenforcements and supplies that Crook needed to take the field again.

In July, Crook moved out to make a junction with Terry in Montana and the real war swirled away to the northeast to culminate its summer's campaign in the Battle of Slim Buttes in Dakota. Crook returned by way of the Black Hills mining towns and the Nebraska Indian Agencies to Cheyenne.<sup>91</sup>

Crook's next major campaign was limited to Wyoming, and played a key part in the opening up the the country to development. He sent Colonel Wesley Merritt with a strong force of cavalry to seize the pony herds of the agency Sioux. Merritt's column fought a minor but effectively important skirmish at Warbonnet creek.

Crook next mounted the campaign itself. In early October, contractor supply trains guarded by Infantry companies moved up the Bozeman Trail to the old Dry Fork Crossing of Powder River. Here they unloaded a quarter of a million

pounds of supplies, and commenced construction of a semi-permanent winter camp, called at first Cantonment Reno.

Crook's striking force with its most important units commanded by Col. R.S. Mackenzie, came up the trail to Cantonment Reno in November. Resupplied here, they moved over to Crazy Woman Creek. Scouts working out of this camp found a large Cheyenne village in a secluded site on the Red Fork of Powder River. After a difficult march over ice and snow, they struck the camp on November 26th, 1876. They overran the camp and destroyed it while fighting off the Cheyennes counter attacks. But they succeeded in driving off the Cheyennes into the winter countryside poorly clad, on foot and with few supplies. Most of the Cheyennes made it to Sioux camps in Montana, but within a few months they had surrendered and in fact turned around to help scout for the army in the final campaigns against the Sioux.

Crook resupplied his men again at Cantonment Reno, pushed off to rendezvous with another supply column on the Belle Fourche River, and scouted the country back south to Fort Fetterman, finding no sign of hostile wintering camps.<sup>92</sup>

That same winter, troops led by Col. Nelson Miles out of the Cantonment of the Tongue River at its confluence with the Yellowstone probed south nearly to the Wyoming Line, destroying one hostile camp in the Battle of Wolf Mountain (or Pyramid Butte). Relentless pursuits such as these in the worst of weather, by troops ready to fight on sight of an Indian, shocked many of the hostiles into surrender. Others fled north to the fringes of the high plains and some even went on into Canada.<sup>93</sup>

Congress now appropriated the long sought funds that General Phil Sheridan had asked for the construction of new military posts in and around the former hostile country. Such posts could stockpile supplies and function as bases for patrols as often as needed to break up Indian movements in the region.

Within the Study Area both Fort Laramie and Fort Fetterman were expanded in this period. For a time the army maintained a small camp on Sage Creek (called by civilians "Hat Creek Station").

Cantonment Reno became a permanent post, and in the summer of 1877 was redesignated Fort McKinney, in honor of Lt. J.A. McKinney who had been killed in the big fight on the Red Fork.<sup>94</sup>

Major campaigns wound down in the spring of 1877, but a continued military presence was needed in the region. In 1878 the first Fort McKinney was downgraded to Depot status and a new Fort McKinney built on Clear Fork

about a mile from the foot of the Big Horns. That same summer for a few weeks, Lt. Col. L.P. Bradley marched from Fort Laramie with a strong force and maintained a base camp on the Little Missouri near the Montana line while patrolling the area northwest of the Black Hills. This short-lived summer tent camp was called Camp Devin (after General T.C. Devin of Civil War fame).<sup>95</sup>

The opportunities for work, and the market for commodities around the main army posts drew in the first settlers to the country around Fort Laramie, Fort Fetterman and Fort McKinney and ushered in the era of early settlement and development.

In the winter of 1878, Lt. Henry J. Goldman took a herd of cavalry horses through from Fort McKinney to Fort Keogh, scouting for a practicable wagon road on the way. Within our Study Area, they simply traveled down Powder River to the Montana line.<sup>96</sup>

That same spring, Captain Edwin Pollock, the c.o. of Fort McKinney, took out an expedition from his post to scout the headwaters of the Belle Fourche River.

Neither of these parties found any wintering Indians, and Pollock concluded that there had not been any within the areas his men searched during the previous summer season, either. Cleary, the Army's new policy was working out well.<sup>97</sup>

Sawyer Exp.  
Annals of Wyo  
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NOTES ON PART VI

1. There are a large number of diaries and journals that document this point, but the most graphic description at a given point in time is the account of Sir Richard Burton (Fawn M. Brodie, ed.), The City of the Saints and Across the Rocky Mountains to California (N.Y., Knopf, 1963).
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3. The Colorado gold rush was a meeting place for the seasoned old hands who had worked every rush since '49 and the absolute greenhorns from the east, along with a sprinkling of Georgians. A quick check of names in most news items from the area against the data on earlier rushes from Bancroft's various regional histories will prove this.
4. H.H. Bancroft, The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft, Vol. XXXI, (San Francisco, The History Company, 1890).
5. Murray, op.cit.
6. Alton B. Oviatt, "Pacific Coast Competition for the Gold Camp Trade of Montana," Pacific Northwest Quarterly, Vol. 56.
7. Burton S. Hill, "Bozeman and the Bozeman Trail," Annals of Wyoming, Vol. 36, No. 2 (1964).  
Burton S. Hill, On the Platte and North, (Buffalo, Wyoming, 1968).
8. Narrative descriptions of the route will be found in Hill, cited immediately above. The earliest mapping of this trail system other than Reynolds is the map prepared by Ambrose Bierce to accompany General William B. Hazen's inspection reports in the late summer of 1866, and the field books Bierce used in preparation of these maps. See: Robert A. Murray, "The Hazen Inspections of 1866," Montana the Magazine of Western History, Vol. XVIII, No. 1, (Winter, 1968), pp. 24-33.
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10. WIS has a full file of newspaper accounts of and comments on the Bozeman Trail from Montana and other papers that we feel bears this statement out. Most useful are the files of the Montana Post for Virginia City & Helena.
11. Robert A. Murray "The Bozeman Trail, from Fort C.F. Smith to Pryor Creek," unpublished manuscript in WIS files, prepared for Montana State University, Bozeman. This study brought together a summary of all known civilian parties over the trail, 1863-1868, from diaries, journals, military post records and the Montana newspapers that were notably efficient at reporting such wagon train arrivals.
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Henry Jensen of Lysite and Casper is perhaps the most knowledgeable individual on the site-specific details of the Bridger Trail through this project Study Area.

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interview data from Dr. John Gray of Fort Collins, Colorado based on his research in Utah sources and notes in his files.
14. Spring, Caspar Collins.  
Collins, Telegram Books.
15. Ibid.  
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16. Ibid.
17. Rogers, Soldiers of the Overland.  
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Recruitment Notice, "Frontier Cavalry Service," (broadside pub. by Lt. Col. William O. Collins, May 30, 1863).  
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20. Main elements in this synthesis are:  
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23. Ltr. Thomas Moonlight, commanding District of Colorado, to AAG, Department of Kansas, 11 January 1865, War of the Rebellion, Vol. 48, pt. 1, pp. 490-492.

24. Ltr. J.P. Upsher, Secretary of the Interior to E.M. Stanton, Secretary of War, January 12, 1865, in War of the Rebellion, Vol. 48, pt. 1, pp. 498-499.
25. War of the Rebellion, Vol. 48, pt. 1 pp. 734-737.
26. telegram, Halleck to Pope, 6 February 1865, War of the Rebellion, Vol. 48, pt. 1, p. 760.
27. War of the Rebellion, Vol. 48, pt. 1, pp. 760-761.
28. telegram, Dodge to Pope, February 8, 1865, in War of the Rebellion, Vol. 48, pt. 1, p. 779.
29. War of the Rebellion, Vol. 48, pt. 1, pp. 782-999.
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63. Grant Foreman, Indian Removal, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1932).
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(a preliminary statement occurs in the 1875 report, with full report  
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Richard I. Dodge, The Black Hills.....
73. Records of Wyoming's Black Hills Mining Districts in the South Dakota  
State Historical Society Collections, Pierre. Just brought to light in  
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75. See 73, immediately above.
- 76.
77. There is an abundance of correspondence on this in the files of both  
the Department of the Platte and the BIA, and WIS has 500 pages of  
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PART VII EARLY SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT, 1878-1905



## INTRODUCTION

The Army swept away the hostile Indians in the campaigns described in the previous section, and set up the machinery to keep them out of the area. This effectively opened the area to settlement, which in its initial waves proceeded quite rapidly, subsidized to a great degree by continued governmental activity in the area, such as the maintenance of three large military posts for some years, extensive beef contracts, other supply purchases, government exploration, mapping and land surveying and a host of other incentives.

The dominant economic activity of the Study Area in the period 1878 to 1905 was the range livestock industry, which went through several stages of adjustment to lay by the latter year the base for today's ranching economy.

Water resources of the high mountains lying on the borders of the Study Area and outside it made it possible to make significant starts in irrigated farming wherever the combination of water, land and markets were favorable.

Mineral resource development was spotty in this area during the period here considered. Railroads fostered small scale coal development at Alladin, a modest sized mining complex at Cambria and laid the basic prospecting and development for what would become a major coal producing region near Sheridan in the next period.

Transportation and communications posed the major problems for residents in this era and the solution of these problems is linked stage by stage with other areas of economic activity.





### THE BUFFALO HUNTERS

Buffalo hunting is one of the most poorly defined areas of frontier economic activity in the Study Area. We suspect this is derived from several factors: First, the existence of a main travel route across the southern part of the study area early and continuously depleted the buffalo crop over a fairly wide belt along the trails. Second, the presence of good wintering conditions along the Platte Valley drew in larger numbers of Sioux and Cheyenne Indians than the nearby hunting resources could really sustain, from the 1830's on.<sup>1</sup>

Even the region away from the main trails does not figure prominently in the story of commercial hide hunting that has developed to date. The carrying capacity of this range is not great, certainly not as great as the region east of the Black Hills. It probably requires about 40 acres per adult animal to sustain buffalo in much of the Powder River Basin. Moving southwest the country along the Sweetwater is about of the same character, but subject to the emigrant hunting pressure of the main trails. From the head of the south fork of Powder River on to the western boundary of the Study Area conditions worsen steadily to a desert character of land that probably requires in excess of a hundred acres to the head and has severe winter conditions besides.

For examination of a wealth of data over the last 20 years on Indian movements, on cultural change for the tribes involved, and on trading operations in the region, it is our contention that the Indians of the region were placing a severe hunting pressure on the buffalo from the outset of the commercial robe trade.<sup>2</sup>

By the 1860's buffalo were no longer really abundant in the Powder Basin's upper end in Wyoming. Ambrose Bierce traveled clear across the area as far as the Clear Fork country before he saw his first buffalo in the summer of 1866.<sup>3</sup>

We know that as soon as the hostile Indians were driven out of the region in 1877 commercial hide hunters moved in. Freund Brothers of Cheyenne had a hide-buying camp and drying yard on Powder River below the mouth of Salt Creek around 1878. Jim White (better known in the Miles City country) had a camp about that same time around four miles below the site of Old Fort Reno.<sup>4</sup>

One of White's associates, O.P. Hanna, who settled in the region, indicates that by 1879 he and White were primarily hunting elk and deer for sale to the Army at Fort McKinney.<sup>5</sup>

Only careful examination of sales and shipping records on the UP and NP Railroads in Wyoming and Montana would reveal the approximate portions of hides that came from this area, and since many of the hunters moved about a lot, these might not be definite.

Due to transportation costs it does not appear that there was a significant buffalo bone trade in this area in the classic period for that trade, but when Burlington came through in 1892, there appears to have been a brief trade in Buffalo bones.<sup>6</sup>

THE RANGE LIVESTOCK ERA



While much has been made of Stephen H. Long's "great American desert" pronouncement, there seems abundant evidence that a lot of people understood the long range potential of the high plains for grazing of livestock. But to engage in commercial cattle raising one must have continuous access to a profitable market, along with a supply of stock cattle, an adequate and appropriate labor force, and some means of managing the herds. The right combination of economics and technology could not be brought to bear in our project's Study Area for some years.

Actually, the region's first stockmen were the keepers of the little trading posts and road ranches of the 1840's and 1850's. They made a practice of trading draft stock with the passing emigrants by offering one fresh and well-fed ox for two trail-worn and footsore oxen. Occasionally they might take beef or dairy stock from the herds of travelers in exchange for essential supplies, repairs or bridge tolls. But for a long time their stock raising operations were on a small scale and secondary to more profitable lines of endeavor.<sup>7</sup>

In 1852, Seth Ward, post trader at Ft. Laramie wintered a herd of work oxen on Chugwater. In that same year, freighter Alexander Majors also wintered a herd of work cattle on the Chug.<sup>8</sup>

The Harney Expedition, and more significantly the Utah Expedition brought a substantial build-up of military forces in the region. The demand for beef on the hoof to supply the army posts brought in some animals that might be held briefly by the contractors and by the army while awaiting slaughter. The Utah Expedition brought the start of large-scale, heavy freighting operations over what had been largely emigrant and trader trails across southern Wyoming. Much of the draft stock for this traffic was wintered at suitable points in the west.<sup>9</sup> Russell, Majors and Waddell alone had over 15,000 head of work cattle wintering at points scattered along the western trails in the wake of the Army in 1857-58.<sup>10</sup>

The next winter, the demand created by the Colorado gold rush provided the incentive for beef cattle raising on the plains immediately in front of the mountains in the country from the Cache la Poudre south toward Monument Hill.

J.W. Iliff was perhaps the largest operator of that region of Colorado, but G.A. Keeling, J.A. Moore and other men soon to be associated with the Wyoming range cattle industry were also involved.<sup>11</sup>

The coming of the Union Pacific gave southern Wyoming direct access to the growing markets of the Midwest, and soon after the railroad came to Cheyenne



in the fall of 1867, the story of commercial cattle raising in the region begins. A.H. "Heck" Reel is supposed to have turned out 148 head of cattle about 20 miles north of Cheyenne in the fall of 1860. These cattle were rounded up the following year and shipped to Chicago from Cheyenne. A number of different outfits turned cattle loose on Bear Creek, Crow Creek and nearby streams. One of these was the Carey Brothers CY, later very important farther north.<sup>12</sup>

F.M. Phillips and Hi Kelly ranged cattle on the Chugwater in 1870.<sup>13</sup> G.B. Goodell put a herd into the Goshen Hole in the early 1870's. By 1875 it is reported that the entire country south of the North Platte was filled up with range cattle.<sup>14</sup>

The cattlemen did not hesitate long in moving north of the North Platte River, once they believed the Army had the Indians in hand in 1876-77. R.S. Van Tassell took the J.A. Moore herd from the South Platte to the Running Water (as the Niobrara was then called) in the spring of 1877.<sup>15</sup>

Market opportunities in the Black Hills gold camps doubtless spurred the northward move along the eastern edge of Wyoming such as the Moore herd.

Carey Brothers relocated their main herd from the Horse Creek country to the north side of the North Platte, and set up a CY camp near the now-vacant site of old Fort Caspar. Frank Lusk took a herd to the Niobrara, and C.F. Coffee took his herd to Hat Creek.<sup>16</sup>

Tom Sun was living on the Sweetwater above Devil's Gate as early as 1873, but went into the range cattle business on a significant scale in the late Seventies.<sup>17</sup> M.B. "Boney" Earnest, an old market hunter located his "Pick" ranch on the North Platte at a spot now covered by the waters of Alcova Reservoir.<sup>18</sup>

Commercial buffalo hunters had cleared out much of the upper Powder River country by the end of 1878, and range cattle began to move into that region as well.<sup>19</sup> Mike Henry established the 88 Ranch at Brown's Springs in 1877.<sup>20</sup>

Moreton and Richard Frewen, wealthy young Englishmen on a hunting trip through the Big Horns, first saw the Powder River country from the top of a pass in those mountains in December of 1878. By the next spring, they had formulated a plan to initiate cattle ranching operations in that area. They built a large two story log house a short distance below the junction of the north and middle forks of Powder River. Other settlers of the 1880's called it "the castle," but it was such largely by comparison to the dirt-roofed one room cabins that were the characteristic settler habitation in this region.

Frewen is reported to have bought and brought in 10,000 head of cattle

from Montana and another 7,000 from Texas. If these figures are not exaggerated, then the operation was one of the largest in the country north of the Platte for some time.<sup>21</sup>

The major concentration of people in the region bounded by Powder River on the south and east, the Big Horn on the West and the Montana line on the north was of course the garrison at Fort McKinney (#2) west of Buffalo, with 281 persons, counting soldiers, civilian employees, dependents, contractor employees, etc.

Buffalo itself owed its existence to the nearby post. Within this settlement were 40 persons, and nearby in Clear Creek Canyon and on Clear Fork below the town 32 more, most of whom were dependent in one way or another upon the military post for their subsistence.

This concentration outnumbered the rest of the population of the entire area which totaled 295 persons!

At Frewen's Powder River Crossing (counting both sides of the stream) community were 49 persons. At the ranch itself there were ten. Plunkett's and other nearby neighbors brought the total living on Powder river at the time to 67.

The country on Goose Creek and its tributaries had by this time drawn in the beginnings of a considerable small-scale homesteader settlement. These included subsistence farmers, small scale ranchers, people who did market hunting and trapping on the side, etc. to the total number of 72 persons.

Other than these, the people were very thinly scattered along the streams, the census taken sometimes only enumerating a handful of persons in a day's travel.<sup>22</sup>

Except for the sheer size of the big log house, the Frewen operation in its first full year of activity appears to have been reasonably typical of a big cow outfit of the region and period.

The census taken on June 9, 1880 found ten people at the Frewen place on Powder River. Present were the Frewen brothers, occupation listed as "farmer", a German-immigrant cook, two teamsters, four "farm laborers" (the census taker's appellation for cowboy), and the only concession to "class" being a 12 year old boy employed as a "table waiter."<sup>23</sup> The considerable style that developed in the next few years apparently came primarily from Frewen's skill at putting up a front for his British investors and from the natural inclinations and \$30,000-a-year spending allowance of his wife, the former Clara Jerome.<sup>24</sup>

Otherwise, the Frewens like the other big cattlemen really owned only the structures they lived in, and a few wagons and saddles and other tack and guns,

much like the Boers on the African stockmen's frontier of the same period.

Once he secured the backing of English investors, Moreton bought up the noisy little stage station and store in the community at Powder River Crossing, opposite abandoned Cantonment Reno, built a telephone line down from the ranch to the stage station, entertained visiting friends and potential investors lavishly, to the extent that people in the region are still talking about it.<sup>25</sup>

Other cattlemen, both corporate and individual, were not long in following Frewen into the region. Captain Edwin Pollock found settlers at the abandoned site of Fort Phil Kearny in the late summer of 1878.<sup>26</sup>

Ominously at the end of September in 1886, the post commander's annual report mentioned that the country was full of Texas cattle and not a blade of grass could be found for 15 miles around the Fort!<sup>27</sup>

Some ranching operations did acquire significant amounts of land by the mid 80's, but these were mostly the ones in less remote locations like the country between Cheyenne and Fort Laramie. Some, like C.W. Wulfjen, sold out of crowded Wyoming operations and invested their money skillfully. Most of them continued to use their capital to expand herds to fill all available grazing lands.<sup>28</sup>

The winter of 1886-87, so heavily written up that it requires little description did cause extensive stock losses. But more significantly it did other things. It alerted investors and creditors to the risks they were really taking. It "cleared the books" of a lot of the book-count-padding of the more speculative years immediately previous. And in the resultant roll-up of credit, a lot of the surviving cattle were pushed hastily onto a market that offered the lowest cattle prices in years.

The general effect was to wreck all but the most carefully managed open-range outfits of the old pattern. Now ranchers and their backers gave the highest priority to finding and controlling water sources. They began to fence hay ground. And to encourage the homesteader, who if he failed could be bought out cheaply, and if he succeeded, could raise hay profitably for winter feeding, and tended to raise a family of more reliable workers than the old trail-herd cowboys. By the turn of the century, the new generation of big ranchers had financial roots down in banking, in townsite development and a host of other activities involved with local development. And the gaps between the big outfits were filled with various sizes of individually owned ranches, who with wind-mills, barbed wire and water rights and hard work, managed to hold their own, and used part of the intervening public domain.



The speculative aspect of the industry soon became dominant, as is often the case when a lot of people simultaneously perceive a view of potential speculative gains. Credit became easier to get, though never cheap, and a multitude of cattle-country banks loaned money against the "book count" of cattle that were never really individually counted. As many of the promoters began to live on personal gains shaved from the capital accounts, there was a tendency for many of the men with eastern and foreign connections to spend less time on the range, and more time in places like Cheyenne and Denver and in the East. If an outfit had an accountant, he was likely to be virtually cut off from effective communication with the clannish cowboys, and dependent for all information upon a foreman. Trusted foremen commanded a high wage, but not always high enough to offset temptations in a position of so much financial authority.

As the country began to fill up with more cattle, some of the big outfits did attempt to acquire watering points and headquarters locations, but until 1886, most of them operated almost wholly on the public domain.

Overcapitalized in relation to actual assets, paying high interest rates, and maintaining little actual control over field operations placed many of these companies in a precarious position.<sup>29</sup> By 1885, it seems safe to say that most of the range in our Study Area was being overgrazed severely year by year. In 1878, one of the main factors in the army's selection of Fort McKinney's second site was the fine range land nearby on which government stock could be grazed. But by the mid-eighties the post commanders reports reflect the declining range-conditions.

Why? Because the cattle were simply turned loose to fend for themselves through most of the year. A roundup for branding calves in spring, and another if any shipping were projected in the fall, would be accomplished by hiring extra help for the constantly drifting army of cowboy job-seekers, and hiring only for the time needed. Ranchers, large and small would cooperate in these roundups that swept hundreds of square miles to bunch, sort and process the cattle. Then, with a market herd of steers driven to the railroad to provide some cash flow, the outfit settled back to simple frontier survival for another winter.<sup>30</sup>

A handful of publications in the late 1870's and early 1880's attracted much attention to projections of profitability in the range cattle business. Two of the most influential were James S. Brisbin's Beef Bonanza; or, How to Get Rich on the Plains, and Walter Von Richtofen's Cattle Raising on the Plains of North America, which, along with a host of pamphlets, and extensive newspaper coverage, encouraged a flood of eastern capital and foreign capital into the

industry. Many early foreign entrants into the business like the Frewens were skilled salesmen in their own right.

All of them emphasized the availability of free use of government-owned range, a low level of investment in capital improvements and the small amounts of cheap labor that needed to be used from the ready pool of young men who would work for \$30 a month-and-found. Initially, capital was invested largely in cattle. Early operators on the northern ranges might be thought of as "cattle feeders" advantageously buying beef herds and then marketing them after adding weight through northern grazing. Very early, however, the potential profits of natural increase lured the northern stockmen into building herds of breeding stock.<sup>31</sup>

Major cattle companies to locate operations in the region at an early date included the McKenzies who ran the Campstool, the LO Bar, and the Curry Comb brands; the Weare Land and Cattle Company, based out of Belle Fourche, South Dakota was one of the big open ranch operators in the whole western Black Hills country; The VVV with its main headquarters in Dakota had a horse ranch on the Belle Fourche. Jess Driskill, an old Texas trail herd hand founded a substantial operation on Prairie Creek.

Sturgis and Goodell's "Bridle Bit" (O-O) ranch was built in 1878 on Cheyenne River, four miles west of Lance Creek. About 12 miles up Lance Creek in 1880, C.W. Wulfjen, already well-known as a Texas cattlement built the ULA ranch under the direction of his principal foreman, young John B. Kendrick.

The Suffolk Cattle Company built the AU7 about 20 miles up Lance Creek in 1880. The Union Cattle Company, another Sturgis and Goodell outfit built the ULA ranch under the direction of his principal foreman, young John B. Kendrick.

The Suffolk Cattle Company built the AU7 about 20 miles up Lance Creek in 1880. The Union Cattle Company, another Sturgis and Goodell outfit built the S&G just across the Dakota line in 1878, but ranged principally into Wyoming. The Cross A on Old Woman Creek was built in 1878, the Fiddle Back on Cheyenne River in 1879, and all across the region a similar pattern developed.<sup>32</sup>

A few of the early small ranchers made homestead filings on a well-situated piece of ground along some reliable creek to live on, but many of the big outfits did not even go to that formality. The typical ranch headquarters of the period was a good deal less pretentious than the 76 of Frewen. A long, low, log-in-panel house and office structure for the foreman, a bunk house for the very few cowboys kept through the winter, a minimal, open-fronted stable (often a dug-out) for the horses that needed to be close at hand in winter, a modest pole corral for the larger number of horses used at other seasons would add up



to the headquarters layout for a very big open-range operation.<sup>33</sup>

The earliest reported settler in the country around Devil's Tower is one John M. Thorn, who at first made his living as a trapper when he came there with his family in 1877 to homestead at the mouth of Inyan Kara Creek. Between that date and 1880, many small ranchers moved in along the creeks in the Bear Lodge Mountains and along the other streams draining down off the Black Hills.<sup>34</sup>

Into this vast and nearly empty region over the next few years came the cattlemen, following in Frewen's wake and bringing with them the traditions, economics and technology that had been long worked out on the southern plains.

There had always been a cattle raising frontier belt to the west of the line of agricultural settlement as the population of the colonies and later the states pushed westward from the Atlantic seaboard. And from an even earlier time, stockmen from Mexico had pushed their herds onto pastures in both the upper Rio Grande Valley and into the prairies and the brush country of south Texas.

In 1880, the old cattlemen's frontier of the westward expanding nation was strung up and down the tall-grass prairie country from the Canadian line to the Texas brush country, along roughly the 98th Meridian. But the Texas range cattlemen, whose way of life represented a complex fusion of anglo and latin techniques and attitudes had pushed north to fill the country from the high plains of West Texas to the Niobrara. Out in the Pacific Northwest, cattlemen had pushed steadily eastward from the old "Oregon" settlements of the 1840's to fill the Columbia Plain with ranches and to spill over into the mountain valleys of Montana, and they began to move out onto the Montana plains just before the end of the Seventies.

Thus surrounded by burgeoning herds, the plains country of northern Wyoming was not long in filling up.

Cattle to fill up this vast area came from several different directions. There were of course the herds from Texas, much publicized. In Wyoming it is generally assumed that the "Texas Trail" was a neat and narrow band of country passing say between Pine Bluffs and Cheyenne, crossing the North Platte just east of Lingle and running north up Rawhide to cross the Niobrara at Newcastle, then angling up across the state to cross the Montana line on Little Powder. On examination of dozens of accounts, we find no such convenient super highway evident.

Southern cattle entered Wyoming over the whole belt of country east of

the Laramie Range. At Pine Bluff, Cheyenne or some point as far north as the Platte, they began to diverge and the various trails fan out over practically the whole country, following water sources, seasonal grazing opportunities and easy gradient topography where possible toward various destinations. Cattle bound for Montana might take the classic and now-marked "Texas Trail" to that territory. They might equally often take the Bozeman Trail the Indian Bureau bought a lot of beef to feed the friendly Crows in the Seventies and Eighties and later. Or veer off to the right toward Fort Robinson or Red Cloud Agency in northwest Nebraska or to the later agencies in Dakota.<sup>35</sup>

Plenty of cattle out of Oregon, Idaho, Nevada and Utah also helped stock the Wyoming ranges, and came in over the old trails from the west.<sup>36</sup>

So, by the mid-eighties this was cattle country, but it was far from being solely cattle country!

## THE SHEEP INDUSTRY OF NORTHEASTERN WYOMING

Like cattle, sheep were first driven across Wyoming by the west-bound emigrants. In 1853 at least two substantial herds were driven to California on a speculative basis, one by Kit Carson, and one by Count Leonetto Cipriani. Commercial sheep raising in the territory began with the operations of Judge William A. Carter at Fort Bridger in the late 'Fifties or early 'Sixties.<sup>37</sup>

Within our project study area, the first sheep on a local basis were probably some of those ranging out of Cheyenne that had been brought in by Judge Kingman in 1870, by Durbin Brothers in 1871, by W.L. Kuykendall. Newspapers of the period reported that 60 to 80,000 sheep were grazing within a hundred mile radius of Cheyenne. Francis E. Warren was running sheep in that vicinity in 1873, and Cheyenne banker Morton E. Post ran a considerable herd in the Pole Creek area in 1875. It is noteworthy at the outset that all of these southeastern Wyoming sheep men were also among the substantial cattlemen of the same area, providing early proof of the compatibility of the two species in managed grazing operations.

The first data we have found on sheep north of the North Platte is the herding of a small band near Muskrat Canyon in the Rawhide Buttes country in 1878, by a man named Jim Davis. Wilson brothers brought a band of sheep to Lusk in 1880.<sup>38</sup>

Through the 1880's sheep increased in numbers over much of Wyoming. The disastrous winter of 1886-87 did not affect the sheep men so much as it did the cattlemen, because of different herding practices. Difficult economic times for the cattlemen during their adjustment toward better management techniques left some public ranges understocked for a time and sheep were moved in to fill the void and to improve the cash flow of many former cattle operations.

Newspapers in Casper reported in the summer of 1891 that at least 50,000 head of sheep had been sheared at the railroad company shearing pens of that city, and an estimated half-million pounds of wool shipped out in that same season. In 1892, J.M. Wilson, W.F. Hamilton and W.A. deForest Richards formed the Platte Valley Sheep Company. They brought in substantial new herds from Oregon. Converse County saw sheep increase in numbers from under 11,000 to just short of 300,000 between 1892 and 1906.<sup>39</sup> In 1907, a writer in Bill Barlow's Budget gave the sheep industry most of the credit for the growth and development of the town of Douglas.<sup>40</sup>

Sheep moved into the Powder River country almost as fast as cattle in the wake of the Indian Wars. D.A. Kingsbury moved flocks from the Laramie Plains

to Powder River in 1883. A.L. Borck and A.M. Brock had commenced extensive sheep raising operations by 1890.

W.J. Thom, later a Buffalo banker, got his start in the Johnson County country ranching sheep. George T. Beck was perhaps the most important sheepman of northern Wyoming in the period of 1884-1890.

Outside sheep speculators worked out a new system of putting sheep out on the range in the care of ranchers who handled them on shares under a contract.<sup>41</sup>

Probably due to the fact that many of the most important operators in northeastern Wyoming grazed both sheep and cattle, there was a good deal less conflict between sheep men and cattlemen than in the Big Horn Basin Country or in southwestern Wyoming.<sup>42</sup> In several instances cattlemen were dominant in some particular region or drainage basin, and would establish a "deadline" that sheep were not to cross. We have found two of these within the study area that were short lived, for the law was on the side of the sheepman, in free use of the public range. One cattleman of some importance, John B. Kenrick did effectively keep sheep out of his range, and across the line a few miles in Montana personally participated in one sheep-killing raid of this period. But on the whole the transition to a mixed grazing economy was fairly peaceful, for this region.<sup>43</sup>

With the organization of the Wyoming Wool Growers Association in 1905, it might be said that both they and the cattlemen had achieved a certain degree of political maturity!<sup>44</sup>



### THE CATTLE RANGE CONFLICTS OF 1889-92

Some of the cattlemen simply quit after the disastrous winter of '86-87, with its exposure of a multitude of frailties in the tradition system of open-range cattle raising. Others hung on, retrenched the inefficient portions of their operation, and tried to adapt to changing conditions and the ultimate realities imposed by the markets, the land laws and the impact of settlement. Some fought back in an attempt to force the return of the "good old days" of 1879-85.

The first such controversy of regional interest arose on the lower Sweetwater in 1889. And it arose largely out of the activities of one vocal citizen. This was James Averell. Averell had come to the region as a sergeant in an infantry outfit at Fort McKinney. There he had a good military record, and was thought of as a man to be counted on in difficult circumstances by no less formidable a frontiersman than Frank Gruard.<sup>45</sup>

Leaving the army in the late 'Eighties, Averell settled on the Sweetwater, taking up a homestead, opening a store and postoffice, and bringing in a lady friend who took up residence on an adjacent homestead, a not uncommon practice in the region, for it doubled the amount of land that could be obtained by a couple in homesteading. Their intentions appear to have been honorable, for they took out a marriage license in Lander which survives in the records today!<sup>46</sup>

Averell's location was surrounded by big cattlemen. He is alleged to have staked out his homestead and that of Ellen Watson in a narrow, linear strip along Horse Creek, taking up wintering meadows that had been used by the Bothwell Ranch without title. He committed other offenses grievous to his big rancher neighbors. For example, he participated in Democratic party politics in that part of the territory. Further, he wrote a string of letters to the newspapers spreading the word of the suitability of the Sweetwater country for homestead settlement by small ranchers.

A group of Averell's neighbors descended one day and summarily lynched both Jim and Ellen. This created the makings of quite a scandal in a region where even women of ill repute were treated a lot better than that. The big cattlemen rushed to justify their action by manufacturing all kinds of untruths and feeding them systematically to the territorial and national press. In the process they changed the language.

Heretofore the term "rustler" had always connoted the best in frontier qualities, meaning one who rustled about, getting things done, and getting



ahead. Even in this writers youth in the prairie country the term was a complimentary one.

But in the rush of press releases about the Averell/Watson lynching, the cattlemen moved with enough force to attach the connotation of cattle stealing, etc. to the word, and in the high plains the term has connoted a cattle-thief ever since.

There was a large gray area in this matter of cattle-stealing at this time anyway. This the cattlemen themselves had created by the practice of "mavericking" they had brought up with other traditions from the Texas Brush Country. This was the process of attaching one's brand to unbranded calves. In theory these were orphan calves that had survived. In practice most big outfits expected their cowboys to brand any unbranded calf they came across with the outfit's own brand if on their range. Some of them even paid a regular subsidy for the cowboy to do this.

Now the problem that developed in Wyoming lay in the fact that some of thier cowboys had ambitions to become ranchers in a small way. When they quit (or were laid off as many were in the wake of the spring count in '87) they might take up a homestead along some creek, buy a few cattle and raise a few calves of their own. They knew the big outfits around them would brand their calves at the drop of a convenient loop, and a lot of them expected they would have to even the score to stay in business.<sup>47</sup>

At this juncture the Wyoming Stockgrowers Association pressured the Legislature into giving a special commission the authority to process and market mavericks, and the small ranchers, fearing confiscation of their stock and effective exclusion from the range, set up their own roundups. Generally the newspapers in Cheyenne were in favor of the big cattlemen's position. Those in Casper and Buffalo were not. The Wyoming Derrick by early 1892 stated the issues quite clearly when it said:

...The fact in the matter is that when the cattle business was first organized in this state, cattle were low and rapidly increasing in value-so much that purchasers of cattle doubled their money in a short time. This led to the organization of the wildest speculating schemes, the buying of herds of cattle by the books, the heavy capitalizing of companies. When the bubble burst and the frauds were exposed, some people were deluded enough to think they could cover up the facts and make the eastern and foreign stockholders believe the business profitable. Then came the effort to "brace" the business by iniquitous special stock laws and the wholesale charge of stealing. This the people of the state endured patiently, in hopes the cattle business would revive. After years of trial they are convinced that it is a failure.....<sup>48</sup>

And at the very time this was written, one clique of the big stockmen were plotting still more drastic means to attack the small ranchers of northern Wyoming. Led by feiry Frank Wolcott, a pugnacious North Platte Valley cattleman, they planned what has accurately become known since as the "Johnson County Invasion." The plan was entirely in character for Wolcott. He had a record of little fear of the law himself. Cashiered from the Civil War army, he none the less made influential friends therein. Implicated in land frauds, he was removed from a position as receiver for the General Land Office in Cheyenne in the early Seventies. He was convicted of brawling at a private party in Cheyenne over matters related to the land frauds. But he was still a power to be reckoned with in Cheyenne Club circles.

With the backing of some of the most prominent stockmen in southern Wyoming, and with the full knowledge of the State's principal officers, Wolcott recruited volunteers from among the cattlemen themselves and hired a force of gunmen from the Texas cow towns. Even those stockmen not willing to go or to send one of their men contributed cash to support the expedition.

Heavily armed, well provisioned, the force boarded a special train in the spring of 1892, and made their way to Casper where they offloaded and headed north. For years defensive propaganda by the stockmen and their associates clouded their real intent. It now appears they planned nothing less than a full-scale reign of terror among the small cattlemen who opposed the mavericking-monopoly of the great companies.

On April 9th, the invading column surrounded the KC Ranch, near the present town of Kaycee on Middle Fork of Powder River. Here they burned the buildings and killed Nick Ray and Nate Champion, alleged "rustlers."

Word of their approach got out and the small ranchers and many citizens of Buffalo began to assemble and organize for an active defense. Interestingly enough, the local company of Wyoming National Guard had been asked to turn in its weapons "for replacement" several months before, and the replacement-arms had not yet arrived! But this was a time when the citizens in general were well-armed.

Sheriff W.G. "Red" Angus headed out of town with a large posse, while others spread the word as far north as the Montana line and men and boys swarmed toward Buffalo.

Learning of the rising opposition, the Invaders retreated to friendly ground at the TA Ranch some 13 miles south of Buffalo. Here they fortified up in the log buildings and in improvised earthworks:.

The posse surrounded the Invaders and over the next 24 hours the beseiging party grew to over 200 men.

Friendly parties got a message out to the Governor, who asked the President to have federal troops from Fort McKinney intervene in the dispute. Colonel J. J. Van Horn, commanding that post received orders down the chain to command at 12:05 a.m. on April 13th, 1892. At 2:00 a.m. he moved out with 11 officers and 96 enlisted men of the 6th U.S. Cavalry.

Reaching the TA about 6:45 a.m., Van Horn arranged the surrender of the 45 Invaders to his command, while the 200 men of the beseiging party looked on with interest. The Invaders were kept in protective custody at the post for a short time, and then transferred to Cheyenne under military guard to Fort D.A. Russell. Before very long they were released on their own recognizances. The Texans left the State. The cattlemen were charged with various offenses, engaged top Cheyenne attorney Willis Van De Venter as counsel, and the case dragged on until charges were dropped simply because Johnson County could not afford the legal costs involved.<sup>49</sup>

That spring the most active cattlemen behind the Invasion pushed for political support in the Congressional delegation to have Van Horn and his men removed from Fort McKinney and replaced with colored troops. The Army would not thus be pressured, but it did concede to bringing in the black troopers from Fort Robinson to establish two "summer camps of instruction," one called Camp S.B. Elkins, adjacent abandoned Fort Fetterman, and the other called Camp P.A. Bettens near the end of grade settlement of Suggs on the Burlington at Powder River.

Troops from Camp P.A. Bettens got embroiled in a shooting affray with citizens in the town of Suggs, much to the embarrassment of the Army, which found the whole affair to have been stirred up by one Phil DuFran, a notorious outlaw member of the Invaders,

The Army investigated the circumstances surrounding this affair, while the Justice Department sent in its own under cover man, E.B. Crossthwaite to gather as much data as possible.

Crossthwaite concluded the whole affair was the work of the large cattlemen, and felt the federal government should not have intervened in their behalf.

When the dust had settled on this active summer, U.S. Marshall Joe Rankin sent in "three good men", Frank Gruard, Baptiste "Little Bat" Garnier, and a Pinkerton Agency detective to the country. Their efforts resulted in the handful of real outlaws in the area skipping swiftly out to Montana and other

points never to return. As able historian Helena Huntington Smith has pointed out, there really weren't many outlaws there, just ranchers who rustled on the side and rustlers who ranched on the side!<sup>50</sup>

It seems noteworthy that through the whole affair some of the stockmen who were to become successful and prominent in the next several decades stood clear of the controversy and sought to develop their own methods of adapting to changing conditions. Perhaps John B. Kendrick was the leader of this group in northern Wyoming and southern Montana. Certainly he, Willis B. Spear, and Chicago financier Joe Leiter had a lot to do with shaping the destiny of cattlemen in the region over the next 30 years.



### IRRIGATED FARMING

The Wyoming system of adjudication of water rights results in easily available records on the origins of early irrigation in the Study Area, and in some areas gives evidence of sequence of periods of development. These are not entirely tied to periods purely of drought nor of just periods of high prices. We suspect that this is derived from the fact that irrigation works at their fairly simplest levels can be quite costly if one must use any amount of hired help and equipment in their construction. It would thus appear that except for the very earliest ventures, the cycles of development where they exist might be attributed in part to the availability of credit, or to some interplay between weather trends credit and short term price prospects for the products involved.

All of the Study Area falls in either Water Division One or Water Division Two, which basically amount to southeastern and Northeastern Wyoming respectively. The boundary between these divisions lies along the divide between the tributaries of the Powder and the Cheyenne River on the north and the tributaries of the North Platte and the Niobrara on the southeast.

The very earliest irrigation north of the North Platte tributaries is an isolated case, when Alexander Moorcroft began irrigating ten acres of land in June of 1877, along Sand Creek.

Not Surprisingly, the military demand at Fort McKinney was the force behind the first intensive irrigated farming efforts in northern Wyoming. Early in May of 1878 Manlius T. Redman opened up 27 acres to irrigation on Clear Fork. In the fall of that same year, the army developed irrigation facilities for 117 acres.

Christian Hepp, who at first worked part time at Fort McKinney, watered 8 acres from the little Piney in the spring of 1879. Over the Rock Creek, Andrew S. Brown brought 25 acres under water in early 1879. Terrill's Prairie Dog Ditch, still farther afield, watered another 25 acres in 1879. And on Cruse Creek, another pioneer, C.A. Farwell irrigated 25 acres in May of that same year.

From these beginnings, little more than gardens and horse pastures, from the sizes involved, there was an explosive expansion of irrigation facilities on the main creeks of this region within just the next few years. By the end of the year 1884, there were 10,186 acres of irrigated land watered by Clear Fork. From Andrew Brown's meagre start on Rock Creek, irrigation there expanded to about 6,000 acres by 1885.



expanded to about 6,000 acres by 1885.

In a more ambitious project, the Prairie Dog Water Supply Company diverted the waters of North and South Piney Creeks across a divide and dropped it down to irrigate 3306 acres by 1884.

The Gerdel Ditch on Little Goose Creek was in action even before the 1880 census taker arrived, and many more filings were made on that stream by 1889.

Irrigation filings on Clear Fork, Rock Creek and the other streams close to Fort McKinney drop off sharply with the abandonment of the post in 1894, and do not resume their expansion until the new century was well under way.

In the Sheridan area, the coming of the railroad and the development of the townsite provided a continuation of the boom in irrigation. Most of the waters of Big Goose Creek were already appropriated by 1898. The Prairie Dog Water Supply Company continued to expand its operations almost yearly up to 1899. On Piney Creek a very large acreage was developed by 1893.

Way out across the Study Area, another area saw a moderate level of irrigation development. On Stockade Beaver Creek, the Smith and Freel Ditch irrigated 125 acres in 1882 and the Sweet, Hanson and Davis ditch 20 acres that same year. By the fall of 1889, 1373 acres were irrigated on Stockade Beaver. Another 2446 acres came under irrigation there in the 1890's and another 595 acres in the 1900-1903 period. Proximity to the promising coal mining region at Cambria probably influenced the rapid expansion of irrigation in the Nineties.

First entires for irrigation water on many other streams in the region run in the 1880's but the acreages are generally small, what we would guess in the context of surrounding activity must have only been pastures and hay for the best saddle horese!

There is no indication of irrigation on the Little Missouri before the turn of the Century.

We have devoted a great deal of space to the irrigation pattern in northern Wyoming, simply because the contrasts between commercial farming to serve the military market at Fort McKinney stands out in such sharp contrast to the general picture of small irrigation systems scattered very thinly along streams in the ranch country, out across the Powder Basin to the Black Hills.

Several other factors may have been at work here, too. Barbed wire was not shipped west in quantity until after 1875, and not really available in

much of Wyoming for several more years. So, it was difficult, even in the southern part of the Study Area to undertake protection of an irrigated hay crop or a garden until after that time.

Early water rights on the Laramie date as far back as 1868, but the majority of filings are in the late Seventies and on into the Eighties for small streamside systems. The same general pattern prevails in the country south of Fort Fetterman.

We expect that labor supply had some effect on the rapid expansion in the Fort McKinney region. McKinney was built through the use of a lot of contract labor. This provided employment that drew in a lot of hard-working outside laborers who were looking for the cash that would give them a start in the new region. As construction work fluctuated or declined in volume, they had the opportunity to scout the country, file on land and start their development work, with the promise of immediate cash returns from the military market.

### WATER POWER

There are very few instances of the use of water for power in early times in this part of Wyoming. Irregular stream-flows, lack of demand, poor relationships between feasible sites and demand with the technology of direct application of power all unquestionably played a part.

The most notable exception is at Beulah, where in 1890, the Beulah Flouring Mill drew 21 cubic feet seconds of water from Sand Creek. The mill was a popular installation evidently, for in 1900 it was enlarged appreciably to use 145 cfs.

There were a small number of appropriations for mining use in the Black Hills at an early time.

### OTHER

When the railroads came thorough the country they made a number of appropriations from several streams to secure a supply of locomotive boiler water. The motive probably being the fact that for the most part surface waters are less heavily mineralized over much of the Powder Basin than are ground waters.<sup>51</sup>

### STAGE LINES IN THE STUDY AREA

Army ambulances carried the mail from Fort Sedgwick to Fort Laramie from 1862 to 1867. Then mail was brought up from Cheyenne by military parties for a few years.

When the Union Pacific pushed westward, the old stage coach service was abandoned in segments roughly 50 miles long at a time as the railroad reached each new inspection-point under the terms of its contracts with the government. This made a lot of Overland Stage equipment and stock surplus to that company's needs. The company then made much of this stock and stage equipment available to trusted employees on credit so that they might be able to start new stage lines to provide feeder service to the transcontinental railway.

#### The Cheyenne/Black Hills Stage and Express Company Lines:

The firm of Gilmer, Salsbury and Patrick grew out of such a background, and developed a number of these feeder lines in the region. In 1876, the firm sent Luke Voorhees, one of its seasoned old-timers on an extensive tour to make a reconnaissance for possible stage coach routes into the Black Hills country from several directions including Montana. Demand dictated that service be instituted first on a direct route from Cheyenne to the southern part of the Hills.

The line ran north along the well-established wagon road from Cheyenne toward Fort Laramie, entering our Study Area where the ground slopes down to Chugwater. There, John "Portugee" Phillips kept a stage station at his ranch. There were a number of other stations, road ranches, etc. on this part of the route for the country here was beginning to settle up (see historic sites list). A few of them are worth special mention.

Six miles from Fort Laramie lay "Six Mile Ranche", operated by George Breckenridge, a former army wheelright at Fort Phil Kearny in the 'sixties. Only three miles from it, closer in to the fort lay "Three Mile Ranche" which was perhaps the most notorious of the stations. Located just a few feet outside the Military Reservation Boundary, it served as stage station, general store, hotel, gambling den and bordello to passers by and soldiers alike. The enlisted men called "The Hog Ranch", but the more elite referred to it as Cuny and Ecofee's Three Mile Ranche.

From the Fort itself the road ran northwest over the hills to cross the North Platte at the mouth of Cottonwood Draw, and then north to a station at the site of the old Government Farm of the 1850's. It then went on to another



station near the southern tip of Rawhide Butte and named for that feature, and angled off northeast to Running Water Station on the Niobrara.

Service began as a tri-weekly run on March 1st of 1876. On October 1st of 1877, a new contract provided for daily stages, subsidized by a mail contract of \$15,000 per year.

Several different routes into the Hills were used in the early years with the result that we have mapped more than one "Cheyenne-Deadwood Route" on the accompanying map coverage. In 1878 the mail was rerouted to run eastward from Rawhide Buttes to a point in Nebraska where it could connect with the Sidney/Deadwood line. Daily mail was maintained only as far as Rawhide Buttes and semi-weekly mail carried to the ranches north of that point.

Russell Thorp, Sr. purchased the Cheyenne-Black Hills Stage company in mid May of 1883, and used Rawhide Buttes Station as his main headquarters.

The coming of the railroad made stage service over the stage line obsolete by the end of 1886, and on February 19, 1887 the last coach over the line pulled out for the final trip.

During its years of operation, much gold bullion from the smelters of the Black Hills was carried out over the line. In the first years there were a number of notable hold-ups and hold-up attempts on the line north of Fort Laramie (see sites lists).<sup>52</sup>

#### The Rock Creek State Line:

With the opening of the country between the North Platte and the Yellowstone to settlement at the close of the Indian campaigns in early 1877, and the construction of the new military posts of Fort McKinney, Fort Custer and Terry's Landing, there arose an immediate need for mail service. Accordingly, the Post Office Department in the late summer of 1878 advertised a mail contract for service from Rock Creek, on the UP to Etchetah, Montana (which was located on Pease Bottom, not far from the mouth of the Big Horn, where a connection could be made with another mail stage line that ran from Coulson, Montana to Miles City.

The initial contract went to George L. McDonough of Alton, Illinois, for tri-weekly service at \$11,777 per year, starting on October 1st, 1878 and scheduled to run until June 30, 1882. In common with the practices of the time, McDonough subcontracted the route or portions of it to a man named Fisher. At the outset the amount of mail was relatively light. O.P. Hanna and Charles Ferguson had a further subcontract to carry the mail on the leg of the route from Fort McKinney to Fort Custer and Ferguson carried the



mail in his pockets! In January of 1879 the service was carried only as far as Fort Custer.

That winter McDonough and his principal subcontractor John A. Walsh failed to maintain the service. J.M. Thorn of Etchetah, Montana ran a temporary service that winter. The Department then issued a contract to George E. Kirk and Wm. H. Gleason of Washington, D.C. in March of 1879. They subcontracted the route with the Department's permission to M.T. Patrick and A.H. Brown. They organized the stage line as a branch of Gilmer, Salsbury and Patrick.

The initial contract ran from Rock Creek to Fort Custer, with service over the line starting on April 1, 1879.

Service increased four times per week in July of 1879, with a theoretical running time of 75 hours over the route. Service was extended again to Etchetah, Montana in April of 1880. Several months later the service was increased to a daily service.

The firm employed 48 men and 162 horses on this route.

For many years the Rock Creek Stage Line, as the Gilmer, Salsbury and Patrick company called this route was the main line of communication through all this vast region.

In 1882, the north end of the line was changed to Custer Station on the Northern Pacific Railroad.

Starting from Rock Creek north, the stations were: Point of Rocks (not to be confused with another station of that name several hundred miles west on the UPRR), Spring Canyon, La Bonte, Fort Fetterman, Sage Creek, Brown Springs, Antelope Spring, 17-Mile, Powder River Crossing, Trabing, Buffalo, Foster's Ranch, Big Horn, Pass Creek (later replaced functionally by Dayton), Forty Mile, Fort Custer and then the northern terminus of the line.

In 1883, a station was added at Crow Agency. In 1886, the line was rerouted to serve Douglas before heading north. At some point in the early 'Eighties, service was added for Sheridan.

For a time in the early 1880's there was a branch line heading northeast from 17-Mile to Deadwood.

In 1891 the service from Rock Creek was discontinued in favor of the use of Douglas as the jumping off point for the north country.

In 1892, the line lost much of its importance when the Burlington and Missouri River Railroad reached Sheridan. We have not yet been able to

document the precise time when service on the line terminated, but its importance was steadily reduced from the moment the B&M began to push into Wyoming, and some mail service was maintained from end of track to Buffalo and Sheridan from 1891 on, and we believe that Gilmer, Salsbury and Patrick dropped the line in 1892 after which time only a local star route mail service existed in the country Between Buffalo and the North Platte River.<sup>53</sup>

### WAGON FREIGHTING AS AN ECONOMIC CONSTRAINT TO DEVELOPMENT

The coming of the Union Pacific Railroad across the southern Wyoming in 1867-69 gave a major boost to the economy, but its effects were severely limited for our Study Area. The North Platte Valley contained the potential to be a major center of development, but this could not be realized so long as freight wagons had to travel 80 to a hundred miles from rail-head towns to reach the valley. Points further north were at a still greater disadvantage. Why? Simply because wagon transportation is inordinately expensive.

Data on the 6-mule army wagon on the period would be representative of the costs of moving light freight and express shipments rapidly from the railroad. The 6-mule wagon had a nominal capacity of 3500 pounds over good roads. There were no good roads in Wyoming. In bad weather on some trails the payload would be cut to as little as 1500 pounds, but in general in this region 2,000 pounds was considered a normal load. Such a wagon made 15 miles a day on the average, possibly 20 if conditions were good and the incentives high enough.

Not counting the investment in the wagon and harness, the daily operating costs would amount to:

60 pounds of corn a day to feed the six mules around \$1.75  
per day for teamster's wages.

Thus to recover daily cash outlay, one had to have at least those costs just to break even in direct cash flow. In reality, wagons wore out fast in western service, needed constant maintenance, and were subject to various disasters such as river crossings and downhill runaways.

Conservatively, \$5.00 per day would be the direct operating cost of such a rig, for 30 days a month, since you couldn't shut off mules like you can a diesel engine!

In the simplest terms, it cost 33¢ a ton-mile to move anything away from the railroad. Or to move marketable resources to the railroad. Imagine trying to set up a ranch, a mine, or a trading post under those circumstances. This in a period when industrial labor in the east only commanded an average wage of around \$17 per week!

The new impact was high prices for everything in the stores in the country north of the railroad. Prices reflected not only the operating costs of transportation, but the high loss and damage rates for wagon shipment, ranging up from ten to fifty per cent on government shipments for which there

was an accurate accounting system. Virtually all early pioneer reminiscences of any length reflect these high prices in the back country.<sup>54</sup>

## THE RAILROADS

Until 1886, no railroads penetrated the Study Area. Railroad promotion was an almost constant activity on the part of residents who wanted to see the territory develop rapidly.

First into the region was the Chicago and Northwestern System.

By 1885, the Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley Railroad (a subsidiary of the Chicago and Northwestern) had reached the town of Chadron, Nebraska. In October of that year, the line incorporated under the laws of Wyoming Territory as the Wyoming Central Railway. By the spring of 1886, the line had extended west from Chadron toward the line, and by May of 1887 had reached Douglas, Wyoming, and in June of 1888, the railroad reached Casper, with the first train arriving in town on the 15th of that month.

Towns along the railroad were located by the Pioneer Townsite Company, creators of Douglas, Lusk, Casper and other intermediate points that were at the outset little but section crew settlements and sidetracks.

This line had a great deal to do with the expansion of the live-stock industry, particularly the sheep industry in the country north of the North Platte River. In 1906 the line ran a branch into the Wind River country by way of Riverton to Lander.<sup>55</sup>

### The Cheyenne and Northern:

This line moved out of Cheyenne in the spring of 1887. In October it crossed the Laramie River at UVA. Early in 1891 it connected with the C&NW at Orin Junction. This railroad was linked to Denver in the 1890's by Union Pacific subsidiaries which were consolidated with it in 1898 to form the Colorado and Southern Railroad, which still operates into the area today.<sup>56</sup>

### The Burlington and Missouri River Railway:

This line built north from Alliance, Nebraska to Edgemont, South Dakota in 1889, and pushed westward to the Wyoming line on October 30, 1889. Then the line moved rapidly westward and northwestward each season. On August 4, 1890 the road reached the station of "Merino" now called Upton. A little over a year later the Burlington reached Gillette, and on November 22nd, 1892, the line arrived at Sheridan.

Here the Burlington halted while the company negotiated with the Crow Indian tribe for permission to cross their reservation. Once this was accomplished, the railroad built rapidly across the 135 miles to Billings, Montana and a connection with the lines in the Yellowstone valley in 1914.



The impact of the Burlington on the farming community of the valleys around Sheridan was immediate and beneficial. Prior to the railroad's coming, one bank president forecast that the bank would soon own most of the county because of the inability of farmers to pay off their loans (which then carried two per cent per month interest.) But on the arrival of the railroad the economics of frontier farming in the area changed. One railroad man says that the farmers of Sheridan County paid off \$30,000 of loans in the first 30 days after the line came to town.

Ultimately the Burlington built northwest of Casper to the Wind River and down that stream across the Big Horn Basin.<sup>57</sup>

#### The Wyoming and Missouri River Railroad:

This short line was built in 1890 from Belle Fourche, South Dakota to Alladin, Wyoming to give the Chicago and Northwestern system access to the coal deposits of that region. It operated until 1926, and the line has since been torn up.<sup>58</sup>

#### The Wyoming Railroad:

This was another, and shorter-lived short line that started from the Burlington at Clearmont and extended only to Buffalo, a point reached in 1916. Service on this line was discontinued in 1934 and the line afterward taken up.

#### The "North/South Railroad":

Long promoted, widely heralded as a major improvement in regional transportation, this line went through one reorganization after another and in its final version would have run up Tongue River from Miles City, Montana to Sheridan, and ultimately south to Steamboat Springs, Colorado, serving as a major connector for all the east-west routes of the region. It came into most serious planning and promotion in a period when most railroads were moving into shaky financial times. A limited amount of grading was done at several intervals along the line, such as a stretch from Sheridan to Lake DeSmet. One stretch of actual line was built by a subsidiary from Casper to the Salt Creek Oil Fields at the height of their first boom, but the line as a whole became but a faded dream with the financial panic of 1929.<sup>59</sup>

The Union Pacific built a branch line out of Cheyenne to reach LaGrange, Hawk Springs and Torrington in the year 1908 and largely on the strength of probable irrigation development in the North Platte Valley. The Burlington pushed a branch line from Alliance, Nebraska down into the Valley at Bridgeport, Nebraska and then built up that valley into Wyoming in 1907.<sup>60</sup>



RAILROAD AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



Towns of the early-settlement era tended to be very small all across northern Wyoming. Open range cattle raising simply brought very little population into the region on a density per square mile basis, and there was not the popular support nor the buying power to require extensive services in these ranching towns.

Within this period, two kinds of events were sure to change the numbers and character of a town. The arrival of a railroad, quite beyond the temporary construction boom, always brought a few more permanent jobs in itself. But its most important effect was to open up new markets for local products and to bring down the prices of imported goods drastically. And it tended to forge economic links with wholesale and banking centers up and down the line. In other words, for example, in the first decade of rail service on the Burlington through our Study Area, Sheridan developed much stronger ties in a business sense with Billings and with Omaha than it had with Casper. And the direct rail ties out to the southeast in Nebraska had the effect of limiting the radial expansion of the economic power center of main Black Hills towns.

Then, second, the development of any substantial and long lasting mineral deposit brought in a while new kind of population. Miners tend to fundamentally be people with an urban outlook and urban traditions. They are not only tolerant of, but demand a higher density of settlement in their towns than would be acceptable to a ranching town population. Their managerial and entrepreneurial elements are likely to be men of higher than average levels of education with business connections outside the region.

Essentially it required either one or the other of these developments to bring any of the towns in the Study Area above the small-village level in population, organization or physical development. Lusk and Douglas were among the first towns in the Study Area to grow up along the CNWRR line, but they plateaued out at several hundred people, as did early Casper, simply because there was not immediate development of sufficient resources to support more than the population that was directly related to the railroad with its associated livestock shipping facilities.

Newcastle went into a fairly long-term boom with the railroad's arrival, because of the development of the nearby coal deposits at Cambria. Sheridan also entered into a development phase for coal mining within a year after the arrival of the railroad. But in the case of Sheridan the coal was of such a quality that it could not be immediately put to use for



locomotive coal, and the development while ultimately greater, was a bit slower in fruition.

The coal deposits at Alladin were from the outset so closely tributary to Belle Fourche, South Dakota that it remained a small mine-site village, while the economic benefits of that coal deposit largely went to the larger Dakota town close by.

In the main, then until well after the turn of the century, the towns of the Study Area were small ranch villages, crossroads store complexes as it were. Only the county seats, by virtue of local governmental spending might really be termed "cow towns" and only Newcastle and Sheridan in all that vast region showed much sign of potential urban development.

#### Railroad towns, stations, and sidings:

Relevant to the matter of historirc sites in the region, we must clarify the impact of railroads on townsite development.

All of the railroads that came into Wyoming came from regions with an earlier history of intensive settlement and a higher density of population. They came prepared to both stimulate and capitalize upon the settlement of the country along the line,

In common wiht railroad practices developed to a high degree in the 1850's when the railroads crossed the vast and thinly settled prairies of Iowa, key investors in the lines also owned townsite-companies. Through the dual ownership patterns involved, they were able to keep track of surveys and consturction operations and undertake thier own efforts on a considerable data base.

Since all of the new trackage in Wyoming was single-track, the railroads planned sidings every few miles down the track so that fast trains might pass slow trains and so that trains going in opposite directions might pass one another efficiently.

In a thinly settled region such as this, obviously not all of these sidings were slated to become the nucleus of townsite development as they often had in the densely settled upper midwest. But the townsite companies would select thos that had some strategic combination of locational factors like water sources, access to mineral resources of potential value, junctions with other transportation routes, and the like.

At such sites, the townsite company would acquire land from the public domain if possible, from private owners if absolutely necessary, in amounts based on their estimate of the growth potential of the place. We should

here point out the fact that the lines reaching into our Study Area in the 1880's and later were built without benefit of land grants of the type that had supported initial Union Pacific construction across the southern part of the state.

Once the land was acquired, the townsite was surveyed and platted for sale to potential businessmen, possible residents, and often, here in Wyoming, to another tier of speculators, with individual key members of the townsite company dealing in the choice lots. Thanks to the writings of a host of critical economists and political theoreticians over the past three generations, much of the public looks askance at such goings-on in the past, but they were open and above board and in fact taken for granted in an era of much greater economic freedom than we enjoy today in 1977!

Both the sidings and the undeveloped townsites were named. The townsite companies and the railroads have a history of naming townsites for railroad officials, for active and useful politicians, and for locally influential ranchers, businessmen, etc. who were already settled in the country at the time the line came through. Most of the railroad towns in the Study Area fit this pattern.

There were cases where a settlement of some kind existed prior to the construction of the line. There might then be no connection between the name of the town and the usual railroad-town-naming processes. Examples in our Study area would include Casper, named for Lt. Caspar Collins, and for the fort that formerly stood not far from the townsite. There was a small cluster of unorganized settlement at this locale before the railroad came through and considerable competition for the railway station site. The most vocal (though probably unrealistic) competition came from the Bessemer townsite some miles upstream on the North Platte. Sheridan, named some years before the rails came through, for General Phil Sheridan is another such place.

Often, places that saw townsite development during the construction phase faded when the townsite-company put its weight behind an alternative site on their land or on railroad land. "Donkeytown" east of Gillette, "Suggs," across the Powder from Arvada are examples of such short-lived developments.

Until near the turn of the century the total level of economic activity in the whole Study Area was so low that it could not support intensive development of towns. Only Newcastle and Sheridan with their access to

coal development that was getting under way really seemed to have much going for them in 1900. Buffalo came near dying on the vine when the army withdrew its last troops from Fort McKinney in the fall of 1894.

Sheridan got a major economic boost in 1899, when the army established a new large post, Fort Mackenzie, nearby. Construction payrolls at the Fort exceeded mining payrolls in the area for many years! This fact has not been much publicized in the community and is not generally known outside it to this day.

Fort Mackenzie was one of a new pattern of military posts, growing out of the need to create large-unit posts for more effective training in the light of our experiences in the Spanish War of 1898, when an army with no more than small-unit tactical experience encountered still opposition from Spanish regulars. Key elements in site selection for these posts included access to an existing railroad, availability of food and forage and fuel and of course a good water supply. Beyond that the selection was made on clearly political grounds. Wyoming got two such posts, again for political factors, for one would surely have been enough in the military context of the period.

Cheyenne merchant-prince Francis E. Warren, perennial Senator, used his considerable influence to have old Fort D.A. Russell, adjacent that city, expanded in the 1890's and early 1900's to fit the new pattern of army posts. But the increasing density of settlement incident to the development of mining and small-scale ranching and farming gave Sheridan County considerable political power. Fort McKinney at Buffalo had been abandoned in 1894. It had certainly outlived its military usefulness, but it is possible it, like Fort D.A. Russell might have been expanded but for two reasons: First, Buffalo was bypassed by the Burlington railroad (probably for engineering reasons as much as anything), and second, because northern Wyoming in the wake of the Johnson County invasion had helped upset the Republican control of the state legislature for a time. The Fort Mackenzie site selection was an opportunity to lay the groundwork for considerable political patronage for some years to come and both Sheridan politicians and Warren made the most of it.<sup>61</sup>



### EARLY COAL DEVELOPMENT BACKGROUND

The Warren Expedition, the Reynolds Expedition and other early travelers all noted the presence of extensive coal-bearing formations in the region.<sup>62</sup>

The first commercial use of coal that we have found in the Study Area was at Richard's Bridge in the period 1853-1865. Very near the north end of the bridge lies an exposed coal seam that the Richard's mined by open cut methods and hauled across the bridge in wagons to fuel their blacksmithing operations that served emigrants and freighters and military parties in the area in those years.<sup>63</sup>

Men from eastern coal fields were among the personnel of James Sawyers' wagon-road expeditions of 1865 and 1866. They noted the coal exposures of the Belle Fourche and Cheyenne River country and made some test-burnings of it around their campfires. They believed it would have great commercial value some day.

Captain Henry Palmer, quartermaster to the Connor Expedition in 1865 took note of the coal deposits underlying Lake DeSmet. With characteristic visionary optimism of the period, Palmer also forecast the presence of oil in the area. Half-tongue-in cheek, he suggested a massive industrial development around this isolated brine pond someday: He proposed that someone drill an oil well, mix the oil with the natural brine of the lake, and set fire to the underlying coal seam, to boil the liquid down into one vast cake of soap, which could then be mined for shipment out of the area.

Visionary and impractical in 1865, this scheme sounds like child's play alongside some of the industrial schemes now afoot in this same region!<sup>64</sup>

Ranchers began to dig a little coal in competition to the expensive firewood from the Big Horns in the Sheridan area in the late 1880's.

One of these deposits became commercially important when Anson Higby ran a drift into the Dietz #1 seam from the old shallow pit workings, shipping his first coal out in May of 1893. Two more mines were opened at Dietz in 1902-1903.

In 1904, the mines at Monarch and at Carneyville were opened north of Tongue River. By the close of our period under consideration in 1905, a considerable coal boom was under way that would last for some years.

The coming of the railroads marks the beginning of serious coal development in the region. The ranch country farther down the line into Nebraska,

particularly its growing towns had always been faced with a "fuel crisis" that offered some market opportunities when the railroads cut transportation costs in the region to realistic levels for commodity such as coal.

The railroads themselves, of course needed vast quantities of coal for locomotive fuel. Good boiler fuel was found early near Newcastle. Coal from the Sheridan field was tested early and found wanting. It tended to shatter when heated rapidly, forming a finely divided, partially burned clinker of such size that it dropped through locomotive grates before combustion proceeded very far, or went out the stack as smouldering fly-ash.

Beginning in 1903, the Burlington began a series of experiments in types of grates, sizes of boiler tubes and firebox draft control that within a few years made the Sheridan coals useable as locomotive fuel. This launched a major coal boom that lasted for some years.<sup>65</sup>

#### The Bald Mountain City Fiasco:

In the late 1890's, small scale gold discoveries just outside our Study Area to the west, up on the top of the Big Horn Mountains, were blown into a full-scale promoters gold boom. An organization called the Fortunatus Mining Company out of Denver (having some interesting ties with a somewhat similar promotional organization called the Dexter Mining and Development Company that worked in the South Pass County a bit later) opened up mines, hauled in a great deal of equipment and generally stirred up a lot of excitement in northern Wyoming.

A small town, Bald Mountain City grew up for one season or so on the vicinity of the mill and mines.

Sheridan County freighters profited substantially from the boom, hauling supplies and equipment up the steep "Sheridan Trail" paralleling the south side of Tongue River Canyon to the mountain top.

Ultimately, with its investors sufficiently fleeced, the company ceased operations, the bubble burst and the workings crumbled into ruin in the most predictable way that such developments usually end.

In this same period several small scale mining operations opened on the Big Horns west of Buffalo, but they did not amount to even as much as Bald Mountain City,<sup>66</sup>

#### The Silver Cliff Mining Boom:

With thousands of seasoned prospectors passing through the country along the Cheyenne-Deadwood trail, it is not surprising that indications



of minerals were noticed, examined and filed on,

Silver and gold deposits were found in the vicinity of Rawhide Buttes and on north near Running Water Stage Station in 1880, and a number of lode claims were filed. Miners filed on a townsite called Bracket City in Rawhide Canyon, and a substantial miners settlement grew up near Running Water, where the Great Western Mining and Milling Company opened a mine called the Silver Cliff.

The mines proved promising but not profitable, and the boom was short lived after a peak of development activity in 1885.<sup>67</sup>

#### The Hartville Copper Boom:

Henry T. Miller discovered the Green Mountain Boy copper deposit in the hills near Whalen Canyon, about a mile and a half from present Guernsey in 1881. He began to develop the deposit and a small log house settlement called Millersburg, grew up around it. Other copper claims were located over these hills in the early 1880's.

On the strength of the prospects for copper development, Col. B.T. Babbitt, the soap manufacturer from Chicago set up a copper smelter on the banks of the North Platte about three miles up the River from Guernsey. He named his smelter town Fairbank.

Post Trader John London, of Fort Laramie, financed the operations of a general store at Fairbank, in the name of his business manager, as B.A. Hart and Company.

Army officers from Fort Laramie became involved in the development work at the peak of speculation. A Lieutenant Eaton opened Sunrise Mine to supply copper for the smelter at Fairbank, and Major Verling K. Hart started the Keystone Mine nearby. The town of Hartville dates from the start of mine development of these two properties.

The Fairbank Smelter burned down around 1885, and was not rebuilt.

The copper boom faded quickly, even though copper prices were high and the national demand steadily increasing. Several factors were involved: First the high grade copper deposits were too limited in extent to permit large-scale smelting operations. Then, at this time, major copper properties in Arizona came into production that promised massive economies of scale in both mining and smelting. Technological innovations such as the reverberatory furnace made relatively low grade ores more than competitive with isolated high grade pockets such as those at Hartville.<sup>68</sup>

### The Casper Mountain Copper Camps:

Around 1890 copper ore was discovered on Casper Mountain. Substantial samples were mined in 1891, and several carloads of ore were shipped to Chicago. A local syndicate was formed for development, and a mining town sprang up quickly at Eadsville. On the west end of Casper Mountain another set of claims centered around the miner's village of Copperopolis.

Enthusiastic reports led many Casper citizens to predict the construction of a smelter by 1892.

Then the reports came back on the yield of the samples from a Chicago smelter. The market value of the metal did not equal the cost of railroad freight charges and net smelting costs.

Clearly, the Casper deposits proved to be another case of limited pockets of high grade copper ore being discovered just at the time when large deposits of lower grade were coming into production in the southwest.<sup>69</sup>

### Iron Mining in the Hartville Uplifts:

While the copper deposits were largely worked out in the mid-Eighties in this camp, another significant discovery came to light. Below the copper ore at Sunrise lay a vast deposit of high-grade hematite ore. Development work at Sunrise and at the Chicago Mine, just across the range of hills revealed a sufficient probably volume to justify interest on the part of serious developers.

The first ore sold from the district came from the Good Fortune Mine around 1897.

In 1898, the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company bought up the deposits and began large scale production. 30,000 long tons of hematite were shipped out from the district in the first year of operation and the tonnages scaled steadily upward for many years.

The CF&I built the company town of Sunrise, and the Colorado and Southern Railroad built a branch line into the mines to haul the high grade ore to its Pueblo, Colorado smelters.<sup>70</sup>

### The Beaver Creek Salt Deposits:

Bart Henderson, one of the old Montana prospectors in the Black Hills rush, along with a small party was prospecting in a creek that joined Beaver Creek below the "Jenny Stockade" site, in July of 1877. Moving up the stream, they found a strong salt-spring. It proved on test to be a strong enough brine to be used for salt production. In 1878 the group

freighted in equipment and built furnaces for the pan-evaporation method of salt production. They marketed some salt for domestic use in the Hills, and then considerable quantities for a time during the period when salt was in demand for use in the silver-reduction works at Galena.

### EARLY WIRE COMMUNICATIONS OF THE SETTLEMENT PERIOD

At the outset of the settlement period, there was only one functional telegraph line into the study area. This was the military telegraph that ran from Cheyenne north along the stage road to Fort Laramie, then northwest from Fort Laramie to Fort Fetterman.

Two new lines were soon built. One was the Cheyenne/Black Hills Telegraph, built by E.A. Hibbard (an old Western Union employee). Hibbard's line ran from Cheyenne north to Fort Laramie and thence north and east to Red Cloud Agency and Camp Robinson and into the Black Hills from the south over the Red Canyon Route. Troops from Fort Laramie were involved in the maintenance of the line north of that point in an agreement that allowed government use of the line at reduced rates. This line was abandoned after a few years service when lines penetrated the hills from other directions and Cheyenne began to lose its importance as an outfitting point for the hills. We have not yet found precise mapping of all of this line.<sup>71</sup>

In 1877-78, troops from Fort McKinney (#1 on Powder River) and Fort Fetterman built a military telegraph line from those points along the Bozeman Trail, their working parties making a connection at Antelope Springs. Late in 1878 and early in 1879, troops from the new Fort McKinney at Buffalo extended this line from the old post "Depot McKinney" on the Powder to the new post.<sup>72</sup>

In the late 1870's the telephone came to the region, but for a long time it would be a novelty to most residents. The first phone we know of was a short line from the post hospital to the post surgeon's quarters at Fort Laramie.

Then in 1883, Moreton Frewen built a 30 mile line down Powder River from the '76 Ranch to the telegraph station or more probably to the store at Powder River Crossing.<sup>73</sup>

Each of the railroads that pushed into the area in the late 1880's had a telegraph line associated with its construction, for high-speed communications were essential to effective and safe rail service. In the spring of 1887, the Northwestern built out across the country from Lusk to Douglas. The army built a military telegraph line north from Fort Laramie to connect with the commercial line at Lusk, so that they could achieve rapid communications with Fort Robinson. For a time most military messages were routed from the Headquarters, Department of the Platte in

Omaha around through Fort Robinson, because of the superiority of the new short connection via Lusk.

Later that year, the army built a temporary (because the abandonment of Fort Laramie was already under discussion) line with metal field-telegraph poles from Fort Laramie up the Laramie and the Chugwater to connect with the commercial line at Bordeaux Station (Hunton's Ranch of an earlier time). About a year later, this line was converted to a telephone line in order to eliminate an expensive \$125 per month telegrapher's job from the civilian payroll of the post.<sup>74</sup>

With the abandonment of Fort Fetterman the military line from Fort McKinney was connected to the civilian station at Douglas and remained in service as late as 1892.

In May of 1893, a new telegraph line was built northeast from Buffalo to reach the end-of-track station of the telegraph following the rail construction of the Burlington. A few months after this went into service, the army abandoned the fitful old line through the country to Douglas.<sup>75</sup>

Completion of these lines meant that by that period practically all the settlements of any consequence had access to telegraphic communications.



## THE ROLE OF THE ARMY POSTS IN THE SETTLEMENT ERA

Within the Study Area for this project, the Army had three major military posts at the opening of the effective era of settlement. One of these was Fort Laramie, a sprawling complex that at any one time had 80 or more major buildings and which was in an almost constant state of construction activity as older buildings were demolished and new ones built along improved lines. Only in the late Eighties did the pace of construction at Fort Laramie diminish as the move to abandon the post gained ground.

Fort Fetterman on the North Platte at the mouth of LaPrele Creek dated only from the fall of 1867, but by 1878 it had become a sizeable post that also maintained a substantial quartermaster depot function in support of the Indian campaigns to the north. Sawmills at Fort Fetterman supplied most of the lumber and finished mill work for the buildings at Cantonment Reno, and possibly for the second Fort McKinney as well. Brick yards at Fort Fetterman made much of the brick used in the 1867 expansion of Fort Reno, and supplied the brick for Cantonment Reno and part of the early brick used at Fort McKinney #2.

Fort McKinney #2 at Buffalo was a new post, just under construction in the summer and fall of 1878. It spread out quickly to equal Fort Laramie in size, and in the 1880 census the post itself was the largest settlement by far in northern Wyoming.

In addition to the major, permanent posts, the army maintained a few small garrisons early in the settlement era. In 1877 the garrison of Fort McKinney (#1) on Powder River maintained a small outpost at Antelope Springs on the road to Fort Fetterman.

Also in this period, the Fort Laramie garrison maintained a small force at "Hat Creek Station" (which was really on Sage Creek) and which the Army consistently referred to as "Camp on Sage Creek."

During the summer of 1877, there was a temporary summer camp of five companies of the 5th Cavalry near the mouth of Clear Fork Canyon. While their reports undoubtedly influenced Captain Edwin Pollock in site selection the next year, this temporary cavalry camp should not be confused with the Fort McKinney site that Pollock occupied in 1878.

In 1878, the Fort Laramie garrison pushed out a large column consisting of several companies under the command of Lt. Col. Luther Bradley to the Little Missouri Country to act as a deterrent to Sioux movements

in that region. They set up their tent camp "Camp Devin" on the Little Missouri near the Montana line, and later moved to a site near the mouth of Antelope Creek. They were in the area not much over a month at the most.

On several occasions, the army maintained a small force near Hunton's Ranch on Chugwater Creek.

In the first few years of the settlement era, troops from these posts, each summer went out in some force and marched through the region for considerable distances. These trips were at first designed to interdict anticipated Indian movements in the region. They had the effect of reducing the occasions on which the Sioux drifted out of southwestern Dakota into Wyoming. They also increasingly confined the Crows to the country north of the Montana line, and in excluding the Arapahoes from competition with the cattlemen in the Powder River country.

As the Indians began to settle down to Reservation life, the troops summer activities centered around training. Practice marches were a part of this training, and it is possible that short-lived summer-camp sites might be encountered at almost any comfortable camping place within a day or two's march from these major posts.

Major Frederick Benteen of the 9th Cavalry was stationed at Fort McKinney in the summer of 1886. Benteen had served with the forces under Custer's command in the 1876 campaign, and played a most significant part in the defense of the surviving portion of the command. A veteran of much other hard combat against the Sioux, Cheyennes and Nez Perces, Benteen was given permission to take his wife, some other officers and a cavalry escort to Custer Battlefield in Montana for a memorial observation on the 10th anniversary of the Custer Fight, June 25th and 26th, 1886.

Troops from Fort McKinney were rushed to nearby Montana to participate in a show of force against the Crows in the Sword-Bearer incident in the fall of 1887.

All through the period up to their respective abandonments, these army posts played another key role that is generally unappreciated by students of the region's history. This is their continuing role as an economic stimulus to development.

No one has fully assessed the implications of this impact, but even a preliminary examination of the base statistics indicates it had to be considerable. Here are some of the key facts:

In 1878 there were four companies of infantry and three companies of

cavalry at Fott McKinney #2, for a total of 300 men. From 350 to 424 men constituted the winter time garrison when there were less detached parties in the field.

Such a garrison would in an ordinary year purchase at least half its meat supply, or in excess of 58,000 pounds of dressed beef. In addition, the Commissary of Subsistence would buy beef for sale to commissioned officers, married n.c.o.'s, and civilian employees. In some years, beef purchases probably totaled well over a hundred thousand pounds, at prices amounting to around 10¢ per pound based on the dressed-weight of carcasses.

The Commissary of Subsistence would make modest purchases of butter, green vegetables and the like in season for resale.

Troops did some gardening at most posts, but not enough in most cases to meet the full requirement for potatoes and for onion, both regarded highly in those days as preventatives for the scurvy that had wracked earlier garrisons in the region. The market for potatoes was certainly sufficient around most posts to give encouragement and some cash income to small homesteader type farmers, for home grown potatoes could easily compete against any that had to be hauled 200 miles or more in a freight wagon!

The impact of the cavalry portion of the garrison was considerably greater than that of infantry, for the horses were issued 12 pounds of grain and 10 pounds of hay per day. For the 150 horses that would have been a normal minimum for this garrison at the outset, this would add up to 657,000 pounds of grain and 547,500 pounds of hay. A figure like this created a sufficient market to be the primary cause of the practice of commercial hay and grain production in the area. In the 1880's the garrison at Fort McKinney often included six companies or more of cavalry, which would at least double those figures. This contention is further borne out by known grain contracts such as the single contract of Robert Foote to supply oats to Fort McKinney in 1892 at \$1.75 per hundred pounds and to the amount of one-million-two-hundred-thousand pounds. Hay contracts might total from half a million to a million pounds a year, and at the latter figure, would amount to around \$6,500 at prevailing prices of roughly \$13 per ton.

The post quartermaster would in any given year have some horses and mules to pull the wagons and other conveyances of the post, and their forage requirements would fit within the hay and grain contract figures

shown for the Foote contract and for hay contracts of the period.

There were ordinarily a number of civilian employees at each post. In the earliest period there were more than a hundred such men working at each post. Their pay ranged from \$35.00 per month for a common laborer (very few were hired) through \$45.00 per month for the ubiquitous teamster, up to the 75 to 85 dollar a month level for blacksmiths, carpenters, plumbers and other skilled labor on up to \$125 a month for clerks in the Commissary and Quartermaster Departments and for the post guide, in this case the redoubtable Frank Guard,

Military and civilian payrolls in a typical period poured around \$4,000 a month into the local economy, in cash, in small bills!

Direct purchases and payrolls for Fort McKinney, then would add up to roughly \$275,000.

Beyond this, since everything had to be freighted in, that could not be purchased locally, freight contractors in early Wyoming depended on the Army for their most consistent business volume.

During the years when all three posts were active, it is easy to see that conservatively a million dollars a year in cash military spending poured into the economy of the Study Area from this source. Remember, then that this was in the days of the \$30 a month cowboy, the \$45 a month teamster, the hundred-dollar-month top-level foreman and the \$3.00 a day miner!<sup>76</sup>





NOTES ON PART VII.

1. Oregon Trail sources cited in an earlier chapter give many comments regarding the effect of the emigrant hunting along the main trails. Nadeau, op.cit., is one of the best quick sources for gaining an appreciation of the frequency and numbers of Indian bands wintering on the North Platte. George Hyde's Red Cloud's Folk (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1936) and his later Spotted Tail's Folk, op.cit., are both very useful here.
2. Both of Hyde's books cited immediately above give considerable data on Indian extermination of game over large areas. The effect was so great as to play a major part in Sioux objections to being relocated in Dakota in the 60's and early 70's.
3. Ambrose Bierce, "Route Maps of Journey from Fort Laramie-Dakota Territory to Fort Benton-Montana Territory, 1866," manuscript surveyor's field book in Bienecke Library, Coe Collection, Yale University.
4. Edward Burnett Manuscript, WYoming Stockgrowers Association Records, Western History Research Center, University of Wyoming.  
O.P. Hanna manuscript, Wyoming Archives and Historical Department Cheyenne.
5. Ibid.
6. Tom McHugh, The Time of the Buffalo, (N.Y., Knopf, 1971), is the best study on the buffalo overall. See also: Frank G. Roe, The North American Buffalo (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 19 ). Most accounts by hunters themselves tend to emphasize that the professional hide hunters who quickly decimated the Texas herds in the 1870's moved largely to the Yellowstone Valley and the high plains of Montana in the period 1878-82. Also notes and letters in the D.C. Wilhelm file, Wm. C. Brown Collection, University of Colorado, Boulder.
7. Robert A. Murray, "Trading Posts, Forts and Bridges of the Casper, Area, Unraveling the Tangle on the Upper Platte," Annals of Wyoming Spring, 1975.
8. Russell Thorp, "The Greatest Livestock Movement of All Time," unpublished manuscript (c. 1943) in the Western History Research Collections, University of Wyoming.
9. William E. Lass, From the Missouri to the Great Salt Lake, (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 197 ).  
Also: Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture, (Wn. D.C., 1870) pp. 303-309.
10. Thorp, op.cit. says that Majors kept most of his work stock in this region from 1852-1962 because of cost factors and that his winter losses never exceeded 10%.
11. John M. Kuykendall, "The First Cattle North of the Union Pacific Railroad," The Colorado Magazine, Vol. VII (1930), pp. 69-74.
12. Ibid.
13. Glen R. and Ritchie M. Burkes and Robert A. Murray, (Western Interpretive Services) "Historic Resources Study, Basin Electric Project" unpublished manuscript in WIS files, 1975.
14. Kuykendall, op.cit.

15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., also:
17. Information obtained direct from Bernard and Noleen Sun at Sun Ranch, June 1975.
18. Kuykendall, op.cit.  
also: There is frequent mention of Boney Earnest in the Rawlins newspapers of the period that we have examined in the course of other studies.
19. Edward Burnett Manuscripts, op.cit. plus those in the WPA Writers project files at Wyoming Archives and Historical Department.
20. Josephine Lucas, "Michael Henry," Bits & Pieces, Vol. 4, No. 5, (1968), pp. 1-6.
21. Allen Andrews, The Splendid Pauper, (N.Y., Lippincott, 1958), is the best overall study on Frewen's operations in the region.
22. 1880 U.S. Census Schedules for Carbon County, Wyoming, microfilm in WIS Collections.
23. Ibid.
24. Andrews, op.cit.
25. Ibid. Local history buffs have consumed hours of my time on this subject. RM.
26. Pollock, "Annual Report of Post Commander," 30 September 1886, Fort McKinney Letters Sent, RG98, National Archives.
28. Gene M. Gressley, Bankers and Cattlemen, (N.Y., Knopf, 1966), pp. 148-150.  
Documentation for Sulfjen's temporary withdrawal from Wyoming will be found in an assortment of Colorado newspaper materials in our files. He bought extensive land holdings outright in Texas immediately following a severe drought in 1885, and invested in choice Greeley, Colorado real estate. We have covered the Wulfjen/Kendrick operations more thoroughly in another study: Robert A. Murray (WIS) "Management and Interpretive Plan for Trail End Project," unpublished manuscript in WIS collection and files of Sheridan County Chapter, Wyo. History Society 1973.
29. The most useful special study of the implications of the hard winter of 1886-87 is:  
T.A. Larson, "The Winter of 1886-87 in Wyoming," Annals of Wyoming, Vol. 14, pp. 5-17.  
All the major range cattle studies cited through this paper devote considerable space to this situation.
30. Gressley, op.cit. pp. 150-151. There is an almost endless stream of cowboy-life reminiscences and other accounts in print and others dating back into the teens and twenties when such stories became popular.
31. Perhaps the first of these promotional pieces was Hiram Latham's Trans-Missouri Stock Raising originally published in 1871, reprinted in 1962 by Old West Publishing Co., Denver, Colorado.
32. Robber's Roost Historical Society, Pioneering on the Cheyenne River, (Lusk, Wyoming, Lusk Herald, 1947).

John O. Bye, Backtrailing in Short Grass Country, (Everett, Washington, 1956), pp. 12-13, 26-42ff.

33. We have examined dozens upon dozens of these open-range outfit layouts from southern Canada to the International Wire and the River in Arizona and Texas in various stages of decay. A few are still about as liveable as they ever were. RM.
34. Nelson Bryant, From Smoke Signals to Telestar, Pioneer Life in Wyoming, (Newton, Kansas: Alen Publishing Co., 1972).  
Dick Nelson, Only A Cow Country.... Pioneer Printers, San Diego, California, 1951).
35. Armour's Livestock Bureau, "Cattle Trails in Livestock Market Development," Monthly Letter to Animal Husbandmen, Vol. 7, No. 1, (April, 1926), pp. 1-8.  
John B. Kendrick, "Describes the Trail Outfit and His Observations of His Last Drive from Texas to the Running Water in Wyoming." unpublished manuscript, Russell Thorp Collection, Western History Research Collections, University of Wyoming.  
Bye, op.cit.  
I.S. Bartlett, History of Wyoming, (Vol. 1), pp. 366-368. (Chicago, S.J. Clark Co., 1918).  
Burnett manuscripts, op.cit.  
Jack Potter, "Up the Trail (and Back) in 1882," Montana, The Magazine of Western History, Vol. 11, No. 4, (October, 1961), pp. 57-65.
36. C.M. Harger, "Cattle Trails of the Prairies," Scribners, Vol. XI (June 1892), pp. 732-742).  
John K. Rollinson, Wyoming Cattle Trails, (Caldwell, Idaho, Caxton, 1948).  
James Orin Oliphant, "The Range Cattle Industry in the Oregon Country to 1890," unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation Harvard, 1930.
37. Dorothy E. Cook, (ed.) brief of data on "History of the Sheep Industry in Wyoming," based on research by Edward N. Wentworth, unpublished manuscript, WPA Writers Project collections, Wyoming Archives and Historical Department.  
Leonetto Cipriani, (Ernest Falbo, tr&ed.), California and Overland Diaries from 1853 through 1871,..... (Portland, Oregon, Champoege Press, 1962).
38. Charles F. Maurer, "Concerning the Sheep Industry in Central Wyoming," 1907 Anniversary Edition, Bill Barlow's Budget Douglas, Wyoming, 1907, pp. 13-15.
39. Wyoming Derrick, February 18, 1892.  
Wyoming Derrick, July 23, 1891.  
Wyoming Derrick, March 10, 1892.
40. Maurer, op.cit. :
41. Cook, op.cit.
42. Maurer, op.cit.



Also: L.R. Chiesman, "Early Sheep North of the Black Hills," unpublished manuscript, South Dakota Historical Society.

George W. Rollins, "The Struggle of the Cattleman, Sheepman, and Settler for Control of Lands in Wyoming, 1867-1910," unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Utah, 1951.

43. Ibid., also:  
Map by D.C. Wilhelm of Gillette, Wyo. in William C. Brown Collection, University of Colorado Library, Boulder.
44. Anon. "organization History," unpublished manuscript in file Sh36, Western History Research Collections, University of Wyoming.
45. The best general introduction to this entire pattern of conflict is Helena Huntington Smith's War on Powder River, (N.Y., McGraw-Hill, 1966).  
Some useful context can be gained by the serious reader from examination of materials in:  
Anon. "A list of materials on the Johnson County War, available at the Sheridan County Public Library," Sheridan County Public Library, c.1972.  
Averell's military performance looks good in the documents that bear on this subject, scattered through the records of Fort McKinney in the early to mid-Eighties. See:  
Murray, Military Posts in the Powder River Country of Wyoming, op.cit.
46. Charles "Pat" Hall has been studying this episode for years and as the best overall collection, including a copy of the Averell/Watson marriage license which also appears in the public records of Fremont County in Lander, Wyoming.
47. Smith, op.cit
48. Wyoming Derrick, March 10, 1892.
49. Smith, op.cit.  
Also: Reports and correspondence of Post Commander, Fort McKinney in Ft. McKinney letters and telegrams sent and received, RG98, National Archives.
50. Robert A. Murray, "The U.S. Army in the Aftermath of the Johnson County Invasion," in Army on Powder River (Bellevue, Nebraska Old Army Press, 1969). Much primary source material used in the account cited here had never been aired in Wyoming before, and is seldom seen now. Particularly:  
"A.G. Document File 29763, PRD 1892," Records of the Adjutant General's Office, RG94, National Archives.  
and: "Special File 6316-92, Letters Received and Sent Relating to the 'Johnson County War,' in 1892 in Wyoming," Records of the Department of Justice, RG60, National Archives.
51. This discussion of early water resources development is based primarily upon the official tabulation of Adjudicated Water Rights in Wyoming (4 Vols.) published by the Wyoming State Board of Control and updated periodically.
52. The best sources on the Cheyenne/Black Hills route are:  
Agnes Wright Spring, The Cheyenne and Black Hills Stage and Express Routes, (Glendale, Arthur H. Clark Co., 1949).

Mrs. Eugene B. Wilson, "The Cheyenne Deadwood Trail," Wyoming State Tribune-Leader, January 27, 1933.

Russell Thorp, "Raw Hide Buttes, RUnning Water, Hat Creek," unpublished manuscript December 1, 1948, in Western History Research Collections, University of Wyoming.

53. No one has yet written a book on the Rock Creek line, but several important sources have surfaced as a result of our research on this project:

"Offers and Land and Water Mail Routes, Idaho Territory -- Wyoming, 1871-74," in House Executive Document No. 332, 42nd Congress, 2nd Session (serial 1516), pp. 595-596.

O.P. Hanna, "An Old Timer's Story," unpublished manuscript, Western History Research Collections, University of Wyoming.

O.P. Hanna, "Odds and Ends" Sheridan Post-Enterprise, August 4, 1929.

"A Post Office Difficulty Finally Settled," Big Horn Sentinel, April 4, 1885.

"Star Route Investigations," House Executive Document No. 100, 48th Congress, 1st Session, (serial 2205).

Edith M. Chappell, "Rock Creek to Custer Station," unpublished manuscript, Western History Research Collections.

"The Old Stage Line," unpublished manuscript, WPA Writers Project Collections, Wyoming Archives and Historical Department Cheyenne.

Edward Clark, "The Early Stage lines from Rock Creek," unpublished manuscript, WPA Writers Project Collections, Wyoming Archives and Historical Department.

"Old Trails," unpublished manuscript, WAP Writers Project Collection Wyoming Archives and Historical Department Cheyenne.

54. For a further analysis of wagon-train economics, see:  
Robert A. Murray, "Wagons on the Plains," By Valor and Arms, Vol. II, No. 4, (Fall, 1976).
55. Anon. History of the Chicago and North-Western Railway System, (Chicago, 1910), pp. 96-100.  
Hebard Collection, "Construction of the Northwestern Railraod," unpublished manuscript, Western History Research Center, University of Wyoming.
56. Bartlett, op.cit., pp. 348-349.  
also: Richard C. Overton, "The Colorado and Southern Railway: Its Heritage and Its History," Colorado Magazine, Vo. XXVI, Vol. 2, April 1949, pp. 81-98.
57. Edward C. Gillette, The Iron Trail (Boston, Christopher Publishing House, 1925), pp. 70-77.
58. Division of Railroads, The South Dakota Railroad Industry, Yesterday and Today, Vol. 3, (March 16, 1976).

Also clipping "Wyoming Road Authorized to Abandon Line," n.d., in Western History Research Collection, University of Wyoming.



59. Sheridan Daily Enterprise, Sunday, December 24, 1922.  
Also: discussion with Gordon S. Chappell at Colorado Railroad Museum, Golden, Colorado, 1970 and 1972.
60. Bartlett, op.cit.
61. This discussion of townsite development of the early period is based on an extensive review of the WPA Manuscript files, of Bartlett, and of the several available country histories cited in full in the next major chronological part of this report where development was more complex and varied.
62. See expedition reports op.cit.
63. Murray: "Trading Posts, Forts and Bridges, op.cit....."
64. Palmer, cited in Hafen, Powder River Campaigns, op.cit.
65. Robert A. Murray, "Historic Resource Study, Big Horn Mine and Acme Townsite," unpublished manuscript, WIS files, 1977.
66. There is a considerable amount of material in the Sheridan newspaper about development, freighting, etc. in this period.
67. During their investigations on the Cheyenne/Deadwood Trail sites, the Wyoming Recreation Commission found considerable material in land and mining records on this development and our account is based on notes in their files.
68. Alice Guyol, "Mines and Prospects in Hartville Area," WPA Writers Project Files, Wyoming Archives and Historical Department.  
Eugene Frey, Report of Investigations 4086, Hartville Iron District, Platte County, Wyoming, (U.S. Bureau of Mines, June 1947).
69. Anon. "Cooper Ore from the Great Casper, Wyoming Camp....." WPA Writers Project Collections, Wyoming Archives and Historical Department.
70. Guyol, op.cit.  
Frey, op.cit.
71. There is a great deal of correspondence in Fort Laramie Letters Sent and Received, RG 98, National Archives, copies at Fort Laramie National Historic Site and at Wyoming Archives and Historical Department.
72. Murray, Military Posts in the Powder River Country... op.cit.
73. Andrews, op.cit.
74. Fort Laramie letters and telegrams sent, as above.
75. Murray, Military Posts in the Powder River Country... op.cit.
76. This section based on:  
Murray, Military Posts in the Powder River Country.... op.cit.  
Murray, Army on Powder River... op.cit.  
Murray (ed.), Fort Laramie, Visions of A Grand Old Post,....op.cit.  
and on some 15 years of intensive work with military documents on this specific region.

PART VIII INTENSIVE SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT, 1905 - 1940.



## INTRODUCTION

We have chosen 1905 as the starting point for this section of our report for a number of reasons. First, it marks a time when there was clear-cut evidence of the direct and complex impact of coal development on the northwestern part of the Study Area, centered on the Sheridan coal fields. It further marks a time when the railroads were just getting set to push out what would be the most important additions to railroad mileage in the Study Area for many years. It is very near the end of the time when the automobile was an exotic curiosity on the trails of the west. Prospectors of a new breed were beginning to take a serious look at the oil-bearing formations of the region. Word was spreading about early dry-farming experiments and thousands of would-be homesteaders were not far from the point of decision that would bring them into the western high plains. A construction-start was made that year on some of the most ambitious irrigation projects of the Study Area.

The interplay of all these factors would in just a few years, bring Wyoming out of the range-livestock era and into a close working relationship with many segments of the nation's economy. For people who lived out their peak working years during that 35 year period, it was a period of almost constant and dynamic change, and in our contacts with Wyoming citizens of that working generation over the years, we have found very little of the sense of nostalgia for a stable rural way of life that characterized their contemporaries in the upper midwest of the principal investigator's youth. In fact, change in itself may have been the most constant social and economic factor in the Wyoming of the 1905-1940 period.

This period saw response to national and international economic conditions in the form of booms and depressions, but it is particularly important to note that in Wyoming there were enough new developments and changes taking place to often cushion the overall shock effect of outside forces on the economy. A sharp depression in one area of economic activity might mean a shift of workers to something else to do, rather than a period of prolonged inactivity. Not widely recognized is the fact that rapidly as the capitalists could perceive trends, from one area of economic development to another, accentuating the difference between segments of the economy that might be on opposite phases of change at a given moment.

This was also an era of improved communications, and one in which the primary and secondary educational systems moved rapidly toward the quantity

and quality levels prevalent across the nation. Both of these developments tended to start to break down the insularity that had characterized the world-view of Wyoming's communities during the settlement era. .



TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION



We have chosen to discuss this section first, since it deals with areas of technological change that sharply affected all of the other areas of development in this period.

### RAILROADS

#### The Chicago and Northwestern:

Within our Study Area, the most important single change in rail transportation was the extension of the North Western line from Caspar out the west end of the Study Area to Shoshoni and then southwestward to Riverton and Lander. This is interwoven in its importance, of course, with irrigation developments in that region in the same period, but it had the effect of making the Wind River Valley's intensive economic development over the years directly tributary to the wholesale, retail and technological center that would grow up in Casper. In earlier periods, the settlers of the Lander area found their main avenues of communication and transportation running south to the UPRR. Now, in 1906, the direct North Western connection cut freight costs just as drastically for them as the Burlington had for Sheridan in 1892 and ushered in a new era of development.<sup>1</sup>

#### The Burlington:

This railroad had run a branch line up the North Platte Valley from Bridgeport, Nebraska in 1900 as far as Guernsey, Wyoming. In the first decade of the new century the line concentrated on development of a line and branches to serve the Big Horn Basin. But in 1913-1914, it put together a more effective statewide system by linking up with the North Western at Casper to provide access to the upper end of its Big Horn Basin trackage.<sup>2</sup>

#### The Wyoming Railroad:

Buffalo, which for many years claimed the dubious distinction for the time of being the largest town in the United States without a railroad, finally got its own line in early 1918. On February 28 of that year, the first train arrived over the Wyoming Railroad. This was a private short line that ran only from Buffalo down to the Burlington line at Clearmont. Arriving on the eve of a great boom in motor transportation, the railroad was ill-timed. It ran fitfully for some years, and today is remembered humorously and patronizingly by most citizens who remember it at all. This line operated only until 1934, and even the trackage has been taken up today.<sup>3</sup>

Other lines:

Other short lines of this period were built in direct response to minerals development and did not actually serve the general public of the region. Most notable of these is the line from Casper to Salt Creek, built at the peak of the first Salt Creek oil boom.

## AUTOMOTIVE TRANSPORTATION AND THE HIGHWAYS

At the opening of this period the Study Area had about as much access to rail transportation as a region to thinly settled might expect. But off in the great open spaces beyond the rail lines the trails were not much better than they had been in 1878, when the cattlemen first pushed north of the Platte. The counties built a few bridges at critical locations on the main streams, ranchers improved a few of the worst stream-crossings, but most of the trails were at best a pair of wheel tracks, well-worn enough so that one could not lose them except in the worst of storms.

From an inventor's prototype in dozens of small shops in the east and midwest, the automobile progressed in the late 1890's to a small-scale production item, and began to spread across the country, bought by the more adventurous.

The first account we find for commercial use of an automobile in our Study Area was the introduction of one in replacement for the stage coach on a mail route that ran from Belle Fourche, South Dakota through Sundance, Moorcroft, Gillette, Sheridan and on to Basin, Wyoming in 1901.<sup>4</sup> Casper reportedly had its first automobile in 1908, seemingly a bit late compared to other town in the area.<sup>5</sup>

Within the next ten years, practically all the old stagecoaches, wagons and other conveyances on the area's mail routes were replaced except in the very worst of weather by automobiles and the primitive trucks of the period.

Automobiles moved into large-scale mass-production with the advent of the Model-T Ford and several competitors around 1907, and their numbers everywhere increased progressively with each coming year.

Few single development affected the day-to-day life of people in the Study Area to the extent that the automobile and its companion, the motor truck did. Even in fairly primitive form, over rough trails, they could go as far in an hour as the old horse-drawn conveyances could go in a day.

But motor travel was still an adventure in itself for a while.

One of the most interesting accounts of an early automobile trip into our Study Area is the story of Arthur Peedin, who came out to Sheridan to take over operation of a tire-repair shop. Peedin went to Denver to meet his wife and the two of them came back to Sheridan in their car.

They came into our Study Area over what must have been the old freighter's trail from Cheyenne to Fort Fetterman, and then came up the Bozeman Trail to the Sheridan Area. Except for a few bridges erected by the counties,



they found practically no road improvements in that entire stretch, and indeed from their descriptions, the country was if anything less highly developed and the road in poorer condition than in the heyday of the Rock Creek Stage Line from 1879-1892!<sup>6</sup>

Within a few years after the advent of the first trickle of automobiles into the State, there was agitation for road improvements. Governor Joseph M. Carey campaigned on a platform that included good roads in 1910.<sup>7</sup> Combining his aims of prison reform and road improvements, the Legislature that met early in 1911 passed Chapter 61, Session Laws of 1911, making the members of the State Board of Charities and Reform a "Commission on Prison Labor," and authorizing the use of convict labor on highway construction. Another act of the same session appropriated \$10,000 for tools and equipment for these road gangs.<sup>8</sup>

In 1911-1912, some convict labor was used in road improvement in Converse County. In the 1913-1914 biennium, Johnson County used some convict labor on its roads. The program continued to expand into the late 'Teens.<sup>9</sup>

Until the period of World War I., county governments had no authority to issue bonds for road improvements, so all of this work had to be taken care of out of current operating budgets and annual tax receipts. This severely limited even what amounted to merely a "trails improvement" program by the counties.

From 1910 into the 1920's a nationwide series of "good roads" movements led to increasing political activity by virtually all communities in favor of a more systematic approach to highway development. In 1916 Congress authorized federal funding participation in such work.<sup>10</sup> In response to this action, the Wyoming Legislature in 1917 created a Wyoming State Highway Department.<sup>11</sup>

Bond issues of over \$4,000,000 approved by the voters in 1919 and 1921 supplemented by returned from the Oil and Gas Leasing Act of 1920, laid the foundation for a state highways program.<sup>12</sup> A State gasoline tax enacted in 1923 added to the funding, so by the beginning of the period under direct discussion, there was a working program for highway construction ready to get under way.<sup>13</sup>

By 1925, the automobile and the light truck were becoming major new factors in the economy and the society of much of Wyoming. Even in a generally depressed period, many could afford a "Model T" Ford at a base-price of \$300.<sup>14</sup> in a period when average per capita income in the State

exceeded \$600.<sup>15</sup> It became a basic working tool for the rancher, the farmer, the prospector, and for a new kind of visitor represented by the most adventurous of tourists. It would not go very fast, but this was academic on the trails of the region. It was generally troublesome to maintain, but it educated more mechanics than perhaps any other product of the industrial age. With the low pedal held firmly down, it would climb surprisingly steep grades, and with the back country option, a dealer-installed Ruxtell two-speed axle, it would rival many a modern off-the road vehicle in all but speed.<sup>16</sup> In 1929, Ford abandoned its production for the far more sophisticated and reliable Model A, and in the early part of the period under consideration a host of competitors led by Chevrolet and Dodge took the road.<sup>17</sup> Most of these were also essentially simple, slow and sturdy four-cylinder and six-cylinder machines quite tolerant of road conditions and more reliable in the field than the "T". Such cars and their light-truck offshoots became the internal transportation mainstay of back country areas such as this. For many ranchers they changed the semi-annual or occasional trip to town to a weekly affair, weather permitting. They increased the attractiveness of employment at back country mines and oil fields through lessening the isolation of such places. Possibly in the first half of the period considered in this chapter, the automobile did more to change the way of life of more inhabitants of the study area than any other single factor, before or since.<sup>18</sup>

World War I provided abundant incentive for the development of larger and sturdier classes of motor trucks as well, and by the mid-1920's these became particularly important in Wyoming, where their main use lay in the development of oil fields remote from the existing rail network and too small to really be able to afford their own railroad. A variety of other heavy construction equipment such as track-laying "Caterpillar" and related tractors, cranes, graders, and stationery power plants became available to change the economics of oil field operations, mining camp development, and major irrigation works construction. All of these unquestionably influenced the development of the study area in a number of interrelated ways.<sup>19</sup>

The Salt Creek Oil Field boom that ran on into the 1920's provided the impetus for the first major north/south road improvement in the Study Area. By 1925, twenty-five miles of surfaced (presumably oiled) road reached out toward the oil field. One resident of the period a few years

later, commenting on road conditions indicated that by that time one lane of surfaced roadway reached on north to Midwest, but that the unsurfaced southbound lane was in miserable condition from the heavy truck traffic serving the oil fields.<sup>20</sup>

The late 1920's saw considerable surveying and grading of roads, followed by gravel surfacing. By the late 1930's, the state is reported to have had 23,000 miles of improved roads.<sup>21</sup>

The depression years brought additional federal spending on highways as a part of the employment programs of the period. In 1924, the State Highway Department began to experiment with use of residual oils as a surfacing material for roads. By 1929 there were 87 miles of oiled roads in the state, but none within our Study Area. By 1939, Wyoming had a system of oiled roads linking all of its county seat towns, and was the first state in the nation to do so.<sup>22</sup>

The increasing numbers of automobiles changed the political context of transportation in Wyoming in several ways. By 1940, the State had 66,981 passenger cars, 19,058 trucks, 10,347 trailers and 297 motorcycles registered. Taking the powered vehicles alone, this amounts to one motorized vehicle for every 2.88 persons resident in the state.<sup>23</sup> In other words by 1940 it would have been theoretically possible for every inhabitant of the state to be in a motor vehicle at the same time and without particular crowding! A good illustration of how rapidly the economy of the region, the State and the Study Area become dependent upon the automobile.

Automobile design by the early 1930's became increasingly dependent upon the needs of the urban market that bought the most cars. There was a trend toward greater mechanical durability as well as complexity. There was another trend toward cars that were faster, more comfortable and generally requiring better roads. The demand for greater speed and comfort on the road became a political factor in the steady pressure for better roads and ultimately for well-developed highways.

Surfacing of highway 87 from Cheyenne into the Study Area and on across it to exit into Montana northwest of Sheridan, and the surfacing of Highway 85 from Cheyenne north to the Black Hills did much to restore the old north/south lines of business communications that had prevailed in the days before the Northwestern and Burlington railroad lines tapped the winterlands of northeastern Wyoming and attached them to Nebraska connections. They did bring some tourist traffic in from the dense settlements of Colo-



rado, but their earlier importance lay in knitting the northeastern quarter of the state more firmly to the political and economic fabric of Wyoming.

Most of the credit for early development of the major east-west routes through the Study Area can be given to a new kind of promotional organization, the highway associations. National and regional organizations favoring good roads developed in the eastern U.S. in the first decade of the century. In 1912, a group of businessmen from Minnesota west across Dakota and into Wyoming formed the first of these groups, and other ones were not long in following.

#### The Highway Associations:

Tying together the business and promotional interest in good roads of the tourist-related enterprises and the local citizens, these organizations played a key role in getting the State to finance the development of a network of major highways. Within our Study Area, the most influential groups were:

The Yellowstone Highway Association, promoting a route that approximates U.S. Highway 26 of today from the Nebraska line to Casper and on over that route out of our Study Area toward Shoshoni, at the head of Wind River Canyon.

The Black Hills and Yellowstone Highway Association, promoting what they called the "Black and Yellow Trail" that entered the state from Custer, South Dakota, headed northwest from Newcastle, approximating today's Highway 16 to Buffalo and over the mountains to Ten Sleep.

The Custer Battlefield Highway Association, promoting a more northerly route across South Dakota to enter Wyoming just west of Sturgis and follow roughly the route of present highway 14 to Sheridan and Ranchester, thence north out of the state to run down the little Horn valley to Custer Battlefield and on to Billings.

All of these associations and some competitive ones in Montana had as a basic goal the linking up of some population center or developed line of travel in the midwest with the region's primary tourist destination-attraction, Yellowstone National Park (which up to this point had been reached mainly by taking the Northern Pacific to Livingston, Montana or the Burlington to Cody).

They staged periodic conventions and promotional meetings to further their cause. Since many of the persons in attendance at the meetings were involved in the tourist trade directly, it is apparent that this newly opened

form of communication helped to speed other kinds of tourist development as well and to serve as an important new educational medium for budding tourist service operators in such remote hinterlands as northeastern Wyoming!

They petitioned state legislatures for road improvement. They participated in lobbying for more extensive federal involvement in highway construction.

These associations all got involved in direct action, too. They raised money and used it to publish brochures and guidebooks that were quite explicit on the good and bad stretches of road to be encountered. They installed hundreds of highway signs with their own group's designation, logos and mileage and direction signs, since hardly any of the states in the west as yet had a highway signing and marking program. This was an important contribution to the prospective tourist's sense of security.

By 1923, the Custer Battlefield Highway Association reported that all of its route from the Wyoming line on the east to Sheridan was graded dirt road, with maintenance equipment responsible for about every 15 mile section of it. They reported at this same time that preparations were being made to put down red shale on portions of the route.<sup>24</sup>



## TOURISM

The dust had hardly settled on the real frontier of Indians, soldiers, emigrants, cattlemen and pioneer farmers when the setting for all their activity became the scene for consciously developed commercial tourism. Ture, Wyoming had early examples of tourism, such as Sir William Drummond Stewart's first trailing along with the trappers to their rendezvous, and then in 1843, with the rendezvous days already gone, making one last grand outing to the mountains in company with Bill Sublette and others. And of course Sir St. George Gore's epic years of hunting on the plains down through the Powder River country.

It would appear, however, that the promotional efforts of the open-range cattle companies had more to do with rapidly increasing the interest of affluent vacationers in the region than any earlier activity. Many of their guests acquired some lasting interest in the region and continued to return as visitors after the great range cattle boom had faded.

Then in 1890's thousands saw the "wild west" shows of various promoters, still more thousands saw the printed works of Owen Wister, Frederic Remington and other interpreters of the very recently "old west."<sup>25</sup>

Beginning in the early 1880's, the Eaton brothers, operating from a ranching base in western North Dakota began to outfit seasonal excursions of tourist into then undeveloped Yellowstone Park. In the same period, troops from Fort McKinney and other army posts of the region summered in the park in the federal government's first serious experiments in tourist-resource protection.<sup>26</sup>

But it was really the railroads that opened up our Study Area to its first steady flow of tourist traffic and launched what through many changes has become a major industry for the region. The relationship between tourist trade and the railroads seems to have been understood from the outset. There was little tourist development in Wyoming's segment of the Black Hills, for them as now, the tourists came to this region primarily from the east, and early Black Hills tourist developments were located within easy striking distance of railheads on the eastern front of the hills. But when the Burlington pushed close to the Big Horns, another tourist region opened up.

The group of promoters and investors who built the Sheridan Inn in that city in the first year of rail service understood the potential of tourism and of the "old west" image in association with mountain and foothill

scenery when they involved Buffalo Bill Cody in their development largely for publicity resultant from his then popular wild west shows.<sup>27</sup>

While continuing their seasonal operations in Yellowstone Park, the Eatons set up what may have been the area's first true dude-ranch in 1904 on Wolf Creek. Others were not long in taking advantage of the potential, and in the years before the first World War the railroads hauled an increasing volume of summer visitors to Sheridan as a point of departure for such places as Eatons, the IXL, Horton's HF Bar and lesser dude ranches. The railroads featured dude-ranches in their promotional literature.<sup>28</sup>

And soon, for a lot of Americans the picturesque foothills ranch came to typify the ranching west in a time when a lot of real and fairly old-fashioned ranching was still going on out through that vast expanse of range land where it there was too much dust, heat and alkali water to attract the average tourist. We believe there is considerable connection between the early rail-borne tourist and the early development of a management framework for preserving the forested, mountainous portions of the public lands in a period when the primary goal elsewhere was to get the public domain into the hands of individual owners.

So long as that kind of tourism was the main kind, the impact of tourism in an economic sense was concentrated within our Study Area to a very narrow belt running from Buffalo to the Montana line at the foot of the Big Horns.

But the proliferation of the private automobile brought a wave of a whole new kind of tourist into the area in the wake of World War I. Whereas the bulk of the pre-war tourists came from the very-rich segment of eastern urban American, the automobile-borne tourist might be described at first as coming from the comfortably-well-off upper edge of the social and economic scale in the towns and cities of the upper midwest. Doctors, lawyers, small manufacturers, etc. who in the post war industrial boom had both the money and the leisure time to set out on a grand adventure into the west.

They found a certain amount of adventure, too, in the uncertainties of automobile travel over the roads of the period. But the tourist business, even in its infancy was linked in our Study Area with the movement for good roads, and three major east-west routes of travel across our Study Area with the movement for good roads, and three major east-west routes of travel across our Study Area owe their existence more than anything else to their promotion as tourist routes in the Twenties and Thirties.

Despite the economic conditions of the early Thirties, automobile ownership climbed, and the potential for a rapid expansion of tourism built up. With the first signs of economic recovery past the middle of the Thirties, in fact with the first signs of real confidence in that recovery, we find tourist figures edging upwards. This stimulated the first wave of construction of "cabin camps" in the towns strung out along the highways of our Study Area. These replaced to a large degree the municipal "tourist camps" that were indeed just neat and well-shaded campgrounds of the first days of automobile tourism in the late teens and early twenties.

In this period there were not the intensive studies of tourism that were launched later on, but in the context of the Thirties, we feel it is safe to say that many a family that left a submarginal dry-farm were able to stay permanently in the region because the men could find work pumping gasoline and fixing tires and the women could cook, scrub and make beds for the new wave of passing tourists.

One manifestation of the new and broadening interest in tourism surfaced in the year 1936, when all over Wyoming a new federally-financed employment program put the literate-unemployed to work in the Works Projects Administration "Federal Writers Project." Concentrated in the county-seat towns, these "writers" included many frustrated would-be authors from among the unemployed. They also included students, housewives, and a handful of old-timers with good contacts among still older old-timers.

In three years of intensive effort, much of it under the leadership of Dan W. Greenburg, who had been an oil-industry public-relations man in the plush years of the first oil boom, and one of the principal writers for Midwest Review, the project brought together a vast amount of information on the natural history, history and folklore of Wyoming on a county-by-county basis. From this large store of data, the central editorial staff wove the main framework of a tourist guide book for the state. In Wyoming's case, the published result came on the market late enough to have only a little visible and direct effect just before the outbreak of the second World War. But one might call the whole project to that point a significant experiment in the democratization of tourism in the west. It was to have a major impact in our next period covered by this study.<sup>29</sup>

## COMMUNICATIONS

### Mail:

At the opening of this period, the railroads formed the central core of the mail-distribution system. On the long lines that reached into the area, much mail was sorted en-route for distribution quickly to local carriers when the main lines intersected branches.

Leaving the railroad, the mails were handled largely by contract or star route carriers between communities and on the longer rural routes of the ranch country. In 1905 a few of these may have used the stagecoach or wagon yet, but such lines were in the midst of a rapid conversion to the automobile and the truck, despite the seasonal vulnerability of these early vehicles to the conditions of Wyoming's roads and trails.

### Telegraph:

When this period started, the telegraph was well-established as the fast means of communication between population centers. With the advantages of equipment that was simple and easy to maintain, and a system that was largely "paid for" the Western Union lines that served the region were in a good competitive position for major commercial communications throughout the era 1905-1940.

### Telephone:

Through the Nineties and on past the turn of the century, the telephone was primarily a means of in-town communication. But about this time the technology of long-lines telephonic communication began to improve rapidly. Lines reaching up out of Casper connected the local systems of the region in the first decade of the century. A line from Sheridan was run with considerable difficulty across the Big Horns to Basin.<sup>30</sup>

But for a long time, phone service in rural areas of the region was spotty, being best developed in areas where intensive mineral or irrigation development would support a system, and in other areas being limited to cooperative service maintained by the rancher-users, at its worst a fence-wire system!



Radio:

This form of mass communication was the first to seriously challenge the well-established newspapers of the area. By the mid-1930's stations were in operation in the major commercial centers, but Casper developed the only stations within the Study Area that could reach out over its entire extent. Radio in Wyoming probably did not achieve much significance as a cultural influence before 1940, but it did come into prominence as the major news-source for most residents and particularly became important to ranchers, farmers, minerals industry workers as a source of up to date weather reports.<sup>31</sup>





MINERALS INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENTS



## COAL

### Early Coal Mining at Cambria:

During the summer of 1887, Kilpatrick Brothers were among the construction contractors on the new Burlington line northwest out of Alliance, Nebraska. As a sideline, they set about prospecting for locomotive coal in the hills of eastern Wyoming. Young Frank Mondell was in charge of one such prospecting party.

After a year in the field, they located a really promising seam of coal in the fall of 1888. Development work started the following year, and extended over a long period. A water supply had to be secured and piped in to the camp. A railroad had to be built in from the Burlington main line when that passed the area. Surface workings and loading equipment had to be built, along with a company town to house a population that eventually rose to around 1,500 persons.

Many years later, Mondell reported that actual commercial production in quantity started around 1900.

Cambria's mines remained active through the great coal boom of the World War I period in the region. Kilpatricks sold the mines in 1910 to eastern investors organized by Elwood Ravenold of New York City.

In 1928, after shipment of a total around 12,000,000 tons of coal, the mines closed down for good. The mining population departed so swiftly that it is said some of them left the dishes of their last meal on the tables when they packed to head for other mining area.

In the years after 1928, the buildings were steadily removed by salvagers, the last remains going away in the hands of relic hunters and vandals in the years since World War II.<sup>32</sup>

### Coal Mines at Alladin:

At some point just after the initial rush to the Black Hills, prospectors discovered coal at what is now Alladin. Folklore still current in 1909 held that a group of coal miners worked these deposits while living in a stockade on the site of the present store. Additional mining was done in that area after the Wyoming and Missouri River Railroad was built in from Belle Fourche.

Peak coal mining activity at Alladin was from 1898-1902, with from 150 to 200 men working the mines there. The largest shipments were in 1902, when some 10,000 long tons were marketed. By 1909, when the USGS investi-

gated the deposit, only about 60 tons a month were mines just enough to keep the little locomotive running from Alladin to Belle Fourche.<sup>33</sup>

#### Development in the Sheridan Coal Fields:

Early development in the Sheridan coal fields has been outlined in an earlier chapter. By the opening of the period under study in 1905, development work was well under way.

With the prospect of a low cost source of locomotive fuel near their western lines, the Burlington quickly built spur trackage as needed to reach the developing mines north of Sheridan. The first of the Kooi mines (developed by Peter Kooi, a Pennsylvania coal man) opened in 1907. The Riverside Mine opened in that same year.

By that year, 1,700 persons were employed by the coal mining companies, and an estimated 4,200 people lived in the cluster of mining towns there. This level of development largely offset for this immediate vicinity the effects of the "Money Panic of 1907," which sharply effected the country's economy at large.

In 1907 the Acme Coal Company was formed by experienced mining men from the Kansas coal fields. By 1911 the company had two large mines in operation just in time to offset the temporary lost production at Monarch when a sequence of fires put those mines out of action for more than a year.

All of the Sheridan area mines were well established and able to quickly respond to the increased demand for coal when the first world war broke out in Europe in 1914. From that point on until 1918 there was a steady increase in production in the Sheridan fields.

Most of the Sheridan area mines were brought together in 1920 to form the Sheridan-Wyoming Coal Company, in which the Peabody Coal Company held a controlling interest.

Mechanization changed the pattern of employment at these towns through the 1920's, with a reduction in the overall employment by about 30% from the peak wartime levels. Within the work force the change was greater, with about 2/3rd of the pick-and-shovel wielding "miners" jobs being abolished at the same time that the mines expanded the numbers of machinists, motormen and other skilled trades.

In 1939, the Hotchkiss mine ceased operation. The mines at Dietz had closed some years before. The two Acme mines closed in 1940, but the Monarch mines remained active for some years, reaching a very substantial production during the peak of demand for coal in World War II.<sup>34</sup>



Sheridan's first coal boom brought the foundations for several sizeable elements in the population of that locality that still figure prominently in the ethnic group intermix of that county. Most numerous in the Sheridan mines were miners from Poland, with Italians about second in numbers, but not a close second. There were also significant numbers of persons of older American stock who came from other coal mining regions in financial, managerial and supervisory positions. Kansas, Missouri, and Pennsylvania coal fields all supplied families still identified with the community.

At the peak of the underground coal mining period, coal from this region of Wyoming found its way to markets in Billings, Omaha, Rapid City. Only the best coal from these mines was really good enough to make particularly desirable domestic fuel that would compete effectively where it ran into comparable transportation costs to midwestern coal, southwestern Wyoming coal or Utah coal. But within the technology of the times, it was good locomotive fuel for the railroads that had adapted their equipment to it, and for a long time it helped hold down the cost of transportation of heavy and bulky commodity items to and from the Study Area.

Coal mining at the peak of the underground period also furnished the major single source of employment in the Sheridan area, as well as at Newcastle. And as we have noted above, made its own special imprint on the ethnic make up of the population of those two parts of the area.<sup>35</sup>

Sheridan Electric & Power Company  
Pioneers in Mine-Mouth Electric Power Production:

The development of intensive coal mining operations north of Sheridan in the years 1905-1915 brought another significant change to the region. Until 1911, the City of Sheridan had a small coal-fired steam power plant that served purely local needs. But in 1910, the Sheridan Electric and Power company secured a plant site on the banks of Tongue River, immediately adjacent the mining company town of Acme. Here, over the next year, they built a new ultra-modern steam-turbine electric generating plant. Initially it had a boiler capacity of 4,000 horsepower, with built in provisions for considerable expansion. Fueled with coal from the nearby mines, this plant supplied domestic electricity to the homes of the many miners living in the cluster of mining towns, as well as to Sheridan and its vicinity.

It is also made it possible for the mines to have electric lighting,

an immediate contribution to the outstanding safety record of these mines (compared with the earlier mines of the southwestern Wyoming country). By the peak of production in 1918, the Sheridan area mines had underground electric haulage, and during the mid-1920's most of them converted to electric cutting and loading equipment.<sup>36</sup>

Wyodak Mine, Pioneer in Large Scale Open Pit Coal Mining:

Here at a point just a few miles east of Gillette on the Burlington line, a subsidiary of Homestake Mines commenced operations in 1922, to supply power plant coal to the company's main gold mining complex at Lead, South Dakota. This at first was a classic steam-shovel open pit mine, utilizing techniques developed in the open pit copper mines of the southwest from 10 to 20 years earlier.<sup>37</sup>

## PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS

There had been some limited petroleum development activity in the region before the turn of the century, but it was on a very small scale. Many "placer claims" for oil, under the only remotely applicable portion of the 1872 mining laws were filed in the area along Salt Creek in the 1880's. Several wells were in operation in the Nineties, and a tiny hundred-barrel-a-day refinery was the pride and joy of Casper's optimists!

The first few years of the new century saw mostly speculation, claim filings and stock promotional ventures in distant places as the visible evidence of oil activity in this part of Wyoming. But when the region's first "gusher" came in late in 1908 at only a little over a thousand feet, development began in earnest by a tangle of companies that over the next few years shook down and consolidated into Midwest Oil Company. Closely affiliated with Standard Oil of Indiana, the company dominated much of the area's petroleum production for some years.<sup>38</sup>

The petroleum boom in this part of Wyoming at this time was closely linked to the development of the automobile to the large-scale production stage, and to the rapid expansion of the use of gasoline for lighting and for summer cook-stoves across a great part of the eastern United States. These developments rapidly changed the balance in the kinds of petroleum products in demand from a demand for largely kerosene and lubricating oils to a demand heavily weighted by the new markets for gasoline.

Standard Oil Company of Indiana<sup>3</sup> was at this very time involved in research that sought methods to provide a more selective production of various petroleum products from crude oil. Dr. W.M. Burton, one of the first trained chemists employed by the petroleum industry, and a pioneer in refining techniques, was by now General Manager of Manufacturing for Standard of Indiana. Acting independently of the top corporate management, Burton expanded the company's research operations through a staff headed by Dr. Robert E. Humphreys. Between 1909 and 1911, the team perfected a functional method of thermal cracking for crude oil that promised to drastically increase gasoline output to meet the soaring demand. With worldwide alarm over what was rapidly becoming a critical fuel shortage, and with gasoline prices soaring steadily to beyond 50¢ a gallon in major European cities, there was now the incentive for a major investment in the new processes.<sup>39</sup>

Standard, Midwest and Franco-American oil companies moved swiftly.

Standard built major refineries to the new design in Indian, but in association with the other companies it made plans for a Wyoming refinery of the latest pattern. On July 5, 1913, one of their agents purchased 84 acres from the Carey CY ranch on what was then the west edge of Casper, for \$300 per acre.

Construction got under way almost immediately, and by 1914, when the twenty thermal-cracking units were ready to go into operation, a major oil boom was under way. The new combine operating as Midwest Refining Company could process 12,800 barrels of crude a day, and through its affiliates controlled most of the output of the developing Salt Creek and Shannon Oil Fields.<sup>40</sup>

Their move into the field was most timely. From 1912 to 1918, the number of automobiles in the U.S. increased by almost ten-fold, along with a parallel expansion of the use of stationary engines burning that fuel. The modest beginnings of the use of farm tractors, and a considerable expansion in the use of heavier fuel oils in industrial and steamship boilers.

Deeper drilling at Salt Creek (still at only 2,200 feet) expanded the known reserves there in 1917. In that same period a whole new field opened up on Muddy Creek, and still another out to the northwest of Lusk at Lance Creek.<sup>41</sup>

The oil boom was the greatest single economic factor in the changes that occurred in the study area from 1915 on, overshadowing even the sizeable and important expansion in the coal fields. But the changes were not just economic changes.

Employment opportunities in the oil fields and the refineries drew many young people from the surplus labor pool of small towns and ranches. But they also brought in thousands of people from other areas. Some were just average job seekers from a wide slice of the middle west. Others were professionals and technicians from the oil industry centers of Indiana, Pennsylvania and from other such points. And still others came up over the plains from the scene of the slightly earlier oil boom in Oklahoma and Texas. Their arrival diluted rapidly what had been a society of cowboys, railroad men and coalminers!<sup>42</sup>

Salt Creek field remained for a long time the center of the most intensive development. Oil field camp followers flocked in with gambling equipment, liquor and women, to live in tent cities not unlike the rail-



end towns of the Union Pacific's construction days. One such place, called Lavoye, relocated several times under harrassment from county officials, oil company executives and other forces. Today, only a few foundations and a swimming pool mark its location. Lynch, Edgerton and Salt Creek were among the more permanent towns founded during the boom. But the major center for the fields themselves was Midwest, a company town founded by the oil company of the same name.

At first called Home Camp, this town remained under close company control throughout the period under study in this part of our report. The company built a boarding house for single workers, later replaced it with a larger one, and built rows of well-built, small homes for married workmen. It tapped the natural gas supplies to heat the whole complex and to generate electric power. And it forbade the sale of liquor, gambling, and other illicit activities. The whole operation reflects a rather puritanical tone brought to the camp by the company's Indiana-trained executives.<sup>43</sup>

The Salt Creek field reached peak production of 97,000 barrels of oil per day in 1923. Thereafter, production declined fairly steadily for a variety of reasons, but still remained substantial on the outbreak of World War II.

The Oil and Gas Leasing Act of 1920 brought about a more manageable scheme of development for federally owned oil and gas resources, a scheme which still was under fire politically in Wyoming until 1923. Then, and attracting far more attention than the peak production of Salt Creek field came the Teapot Dome scandals, involving the non-competitive leasing of nearly 10,000 of naval petroleum reserves not far from Salt Creek. The incident is best known for its tales of bribery and malfeasance by company and government officials, but in many ways it was but a climactic symptom of some of the political overtones of resource management and conservation that had been building pressure in Washington, D.C. and in Wyoming for almost ten years.<sup>44</sup>

While the building of new long-distance pipelines in the mid 1920's gave Wyoming oil and access to broader and more competitive markets, other factors caused a downturn in the marketability of Wyoming oil in the late Twenties. Noteably important were the extensive new finds in other areas, the expansion of the major oil companies into production in overseas area, causing a general oversupply of crude oil for the time being. But while it lasted, this first oil boom put enough cash in circulation to materially



soften the blow that events of 1921-22 dealt to ranching and farming in the state, and permanently affected the degree of urbanization of a number of communities. At its peak, the boom produced enough cash flow to support all kinds of "fringe benefits" at Midwest ranging from cheap housing and utilities to good schools and a company magazine that in many ways is one of the literary highlights of the late 1920's in the region. With the coming of a decline in oil marketing in the great national depression of the 1930's, a lot of the frills were trimmed away from the center of the oil boom, and the Midwest Review quietly died on the vine.<sup>45</sup>

International conditions and a new expansion of automotive transportation in the late 1930's caused somewhat of a revival in the oil patches of Wyoming, and Casper came out of the Thirties perhaps the most prosperous town in the state. By this time much of the dry old ranch country on Salt Creek and over that area was covered with old and new oil field equipment, forever changed from the days when freighters first greased their wagons at the oil slicks of the area in the late 1870's!

### OTHER MINERALS

Northeastern Wyoming did not in this period see quite the diversity of minerals development that marked the 1905-1940 period in some other parts of the west. Even where mineral deposits were known, in many cases they were not so attractive from a profit standpoint as similar but richer reserves of the same minerals elsewhere.

During the late 1930's, bentonite for use in oil field operations became marketable enough to encourage an operation for its production in northeastern Crook County, and the settlement of Colony grew up around the mines and mills along the ravines that gave access to these deposits in that area. Other bentonite deposits, these along the Burlington northwest of Newcastle were discovered at about this same time, though their importance did not really develop until a bit later.<sup>46</sup>

Community growth and change brought an expanded amount of stone quarrying, more gravel pit operations, and a use for the abundant red baked-shale of the coal country, but most of these operations were local, rather than regional in their importance.



AGRICULTURE





## INTRODUCTION

Whereas in the foregoing time-period in this report, we dealt with ranching in the main as representative of agriculture, supplemented by limited and localized irrigation developments, we must now turn to a period in which three separate phases of agricultural activity proceeded in large measure in development cycles of their own within the greater over-all ups and downs of western agriculture in the period.

## RANCHING

By 1905, the "new ranching" that was already stirring in the wreckage of the old order by the time old-time range conflicts reached a climax in 1892, had taken over. There were still sizeable pieces of "open range" in the Study Area, but in the first five years of the new century the pace of homesteading began to accelerate. Ranchers encouraged their relatives, friends, employees and newcomers to the region to homestead tracts that could be used to control access to water, tracts that had some immediate value as flood-irrigated meadows that barbed wire could hold in reserve for winter feed or hay. They also bought increasing amounts of land.

How was this kind of expansion financed, when there was also an increasing need for capital to invest in fences, sheds, hay corrals, and the like? Partly at least by the increasing land values themselves as the population built up. With a land market rising and with the end of free range in sight in a practical sense, at least, and with many ranchers now moving into banking and other activities supportive of development, it became easier to finance the purchase of range land and improvements.

State school sections brought higher lease prices, but were not sufficiently in demand to prevent a multitude of land exchanges that gave some ranchers extensive control of access to key streams that bisected large blocks of high, dry range lands that could be controlled by those who had the water.<sup>47</sup>

But, as any examination of land maps will show, more and more of the public domain, no matter how dry and desolate appearing, came into private ownership. The land laws gave some encouragement. In 1909, Congress authorized homesteads of 320 acres, double the size of the original legislation. In 1916 came the stockraising homestead that allowed 640 acres to the homesteader, but with the provision that mineral rights were reserved to the federal government, a reservation that has multiplied the complication of

federal resource administration in very recent years, but had little immediate effect at the time.<sup>48</sup>

Some of the largest ranch holdings of the region were put together during the period of 1905-1920. Some, like those of John B. Kendrick, were assembled from a framework salvaged from open-range operations of some other antecedent companies and financed with profits of other ventures.<sup>49</sup> Others, like the extensive holdings of Willis Spear, appear to have been assembled largely on the strength of management and promotional skills of a family that brought together key land holdings of absentee landlords (such as Levi Leiter of Chicago) that had been acquired for speculative purposes as railroads were extended into the region.<sup>50</sup> Still others, like Keeline ranches down across Campbell, Converse and Niobrara counties were put together by close-knit families that cooperated with one another, bought land at every opportunity and ran a fairly tight financial operation.<sup>51</sup>

A severe winter in 1911-1912 caused heavy stock losses across the northern part of the area, but the greater credit resources of the region brought about by minerals development, coupled with rising market prices brought on a new cattle and sheep boom that lasted from 1913 to 1919. There were some increases in costs to the stockmen in this period, but in general labor costs did not respond directly to the pressures of alternative opportunity in the minerals industry, simply because the ranch hand of the period for the most part did not particularly care to go off the mines or the oil field. Taxes on ranch land did not rise very rapidly, either. And in the war years, beef, hides, wool and mutton all went up to far above their pre-war levels.<sup>52</sup>

Then in 1919 began 20 years of persistent trouble for the rancher. Starting in 1917, dryer weather seemed to push steadily southeastward over the northern high plains. In 1919 with the highest peak of wartime prices just past, the weather was dry enough to force many stockmen into shipping their sheep and cattle in much larger numbers than the annual increase. National economic conditions worsened in 1920 and early 1921. The net impact of all this on ranching (and on farming as we shall see further on in this section) was that prices in the last half of 1921 dropped to around a fourth of their wartime highs.<sup>53</sup>

Large numbers of the more speculative fringe of the small to medium sized ranch operators sold out or saw foreclosure actions over the next several years. We got the general impression that more ranchers weathered

the worst of this period than did dryland farmers and irrigated farm operators. Several reasons appear evident: First, a greater portion of the ranchers assets in the form of livestock could be sold off to meet immediate demands of creditors. Then many medium to large ranch operators were involved in local banking themselves to some degree, or else had more immediate access than farmers to the distant well springs of capital.<sup>54</sup> Even the biggest operators retrenched their rate of expansion markedly. Some settled for solid comfort and considered themselves lucky it would appear. Senator John B. Kendrick, writing in the mid-1920's considered all of the events of the then recent period as signs that the cattle business had passed the era of romance and adventure and was now a business like any other. Kendrick had indeed lived through the adventurous period of growth in the industry. He came north a trail herd cowboy, became a much respected forman, married C.W. Wulfjen's daughter, and bought the O.W. ranches out of receivership. Through bold risk-taking and skilled management, he built up an empire that stretched across northern Wyoming from the Little Missouri to the foot of the Big Horns and down a hundred miles into Montana on Tullock Creek. And then sustained the operation through successful adventures into urban real estate, banking and publishing. And by 1925 had become a very conservative cattleman, urging caution to both the ranchers and their ranch-country bankers!<sup>55</sup>

Kendrick pointed out that in most cases in the mid 1920's cattle themselves accounted for less than half the rancher's investment, and in many cases for a third of that investment. He felt at that time that the industry needed to move toward higher grade cattle that could be marketed at an earlier age. He also felt that ranchers needed to be more secure in terms of feed resources against dry years or adverse marketing conditions.<sup>56</sup>

A lot of other Wyoming ranchers apparently felt the same way, and this trend appears to be what carried a lot of them through the still more adverse times of economic dislocation and still more drought conditions in the mid 1930's when the last of the old-style big outfits in the region finally broke up.

When 1940 came, there were still big ranches, just as there are today, but for the most part they were big ranches that fitted the criteria that Kendrick set forth in the Twenties, backed by conservative bankers of the Kendrick mold!



## THE IRRIGATION PROJECTS

Sharply contrasting with the life-style of the ranch country around them, and for the matter with the life-style of the small scale rancher/irrigators that developed the country draining off the eastern face of the Big Horns and the country just south of the Black Hills in the turn of the century period were the farmers of the large irrigation projects. In the period 1905 to 1940 they wrought a major change in the landscape of large tracts within the southern part of our Study Area.

Developers led by Joseph Maull Carey, his sons and others began to investigate the feasibility of a major irrigation project and to file water rights for it on the Laramie River as early as 1883. Large scale irrigation requires a massive capital investment, and the project took many years to develop. The first phase involved the diversion of much of Sybille Creek into a canal to bring its waters onto what became known as the "Wheatland Flats." In the 1890's work pushed intermittently forward with the development of a natural basin into "Reservoir #1" with a capacity of 8,500 acre feet, and the construction of Reservoir #2, with an ultimate capacity of 98,000 acre feet. The town of Wheatland was founded in 1894, and quickly became the business center for construction and settlement of the project.

Over 13,000 acres of irrigated farm land were sold in the month of August of 1903 alone.<sup>57</sup>

In the years when the Wheatland project was moving into its most intensive development another irrigation project of still greater magnitude was getting under way. This was the vast North Platte Project. The Reclamation Act of 1902 authorized direct federal construction of irrigation projects. Wyoming had led the fight for such a program, and was not long in getting some key projects started.

On March 14, 1903 the North Platte project was authorized. Surveys began at an early date, with actual construction started in 1905. All of the initially planned elements of this project were not complete until the mid-1920's, but a great deal of land was brought into irrigated farm production before that time.

Pathfinder Dam, located on the North Platte River about 40 miles upstream from Casper formed the main storage reservoir for the project, while Guernsey Dam, just upstream from the town of that name was the other key storage unit in Wyoming. Whalen Diversion dam turned the waters of the

North Platte into two major canals extending down both sides of the North Platte valley from just above Fort Laramie.

Ultimately those works along with storage reservoirs in Nebraska and over 1600 miles of canals created one of the largest irrigated areas in the world, with over 335,000 acres under active irrigation, a little over a hundred thousand acres of which was in Wyoming.<sup>58</sup>

Work started in the late 1930's on the Kendrick project with the completion of Seminoe Dam, Alcova Dam and an extensive system of canals, but no water was delivered through the system until its final completion, delayed some years by extensive litigation with other water users.<sup>59</sup>

Irrigation waters of the North Platte project were sufficiently expensive to require a reliable cash crop from the very first. For the region along that valley, this crop was the sugar beet, whose culture on the high plains had been pioneered not long before in the country at the foot of the front range in Colorado.

Sugar production began to operate in a closed market, with more federal controls than most agriculture of the time, with the passage of the Sugar Act of 1902. Under subsequent arrangements worked out between the government, the companies and the sugar-beet growers, the beet-producing territory was essentially parceled out between the companies for sugar processing.

Holly Sugar Company built a large factory at Torrington to serve the North Platte Project. They set up loading stations up and down the North Platte Project. The factory is still in active operation along with most of the loading stations, but has been continuously modernized.

Parallel to the start of the sugar beet industry on the North Platte Project, a factory was built in Sheridan in 1916. But here the conditions were drastically different. Winters were more severe, spring planting season held uncertain weather and the area's small field patterns, almost hectic pattern of small private irrigation systems, and heavy soils all worked against the success of a major sugar development here. Ultimately in 1936, the Holly Sugar Company shut down its operations at Sheridan and opened a new and modern factory at Hardin, Montana, in the heart of what had become a great beet producing region on the Crow Reservation and adjacent parts of the Big Horn Valley in Montana.

Sugar beet culture until very recent years had required the use of a great deal of hand labor. Early in the season, beets had to be thinned shortly after their sprouts collectively forced their way through the



ground. As the spring and summer progressed, there was hand-weeding within the rows of plants. And prior to harvest there was a topping operation.

These labor requirements of the beet crop changed the ethnic composition of population in the project area sharply at two stages. First, the early labor supply for the beet crop came from Volga German farm laborers. Some of these came from other Volga German settlements in Colorado and in Nebraska. As they got settled, they encouraged more of their relatives to emigrate to the area from the increasingly uncomfortable political and economic climate of pre-revolutionary Russia.

In one generation most of these Volga Germans, through hard work and thrift, made the transition from hired laborer to tenant farmer, and many reached the status of farm owners in just a bit more time.

During the brief labor shortage of the first World War, a few Mexican American workers came into the area seasonally to provide the hand labor on many farms. They proved satisfactory enough to warrant expansion of recruitment in their settlements in Colorado, New Mexico and Texas. By 1940, many of these people had relocated permanently in the North Platte Project area, and others came in repeatedly to work season after season on the same sequence of farms as the crop matured.

Throughout the early years of the North Platte Project discussed in this section, primary crops of the area were sugar beets and alfalfa, the latter legume providing a highly saleable hay crop and improving soils as well. Farther downstream on lands watered by the project, corn was an important irrigated crop, but in Wyoming the season was too short and summer nights too cool for then-available varieties of corn to mature to grain crop.

As power farm equipment in the 1930's began to replace horses at an ever expanding rate, the need for an acreage of oats or other grain for horses diminished, and corn and grain-sorgums filled out corners of the irrigated land, producing a silage crop, which along with alfalfa and sugar-beet-pulp gave this project a strong basis for cattle feeding operations.<sup>60</sup>

#### Small Scale Irrigation Operations:

In areas where irrigation was well-established, such as the country around Buffalo and Sheridan, alfalfa continued through this period to be the primary crop on irrigated land. Federal programs of the Thirties caused a great deal of activity to improve and upgrade older irrigation systems and to build extensions of the smaller ones.<sup>61</sup>

### DRY FARMING

This is essentially the practice of raising crops, usually wheat, on a given tract of land in alternate years, in an area where annual precipitation will not sustain a crop of grain every year. The system depended on cultivation during the interim year to conserve moisture that would have otherwise been lost to evaporation or to weed growth. It was not a new concept, but it arrived a bit late in Wyoming and had a highly developed body of literature and a broad success record behind it.

There is supposed to have been a little dry farming in Crook County and in what is now Niobrara County by around 1890, but it was apparently on a relatively small scale.

Word of dry farming activity in other states spread to Wyoming in the early 1900's. Clarence T. Johnson, the State Engineer in 1904 recommended the Campbell System of dry farming in his biennial report. Over the next few years a large number of organizations studied the promoted dry farming.<sup>62</sup>

A critical problem lay almost unnoticed as this ground swell of promotion moved along. Most of the successes of dry farming techniques in other areas lay in regions where the rainfall was around 15 inches per year. Too many people applied statewide averages to their discussions of the potential for dry farming in Wyoming, averages that were always weighted upward by the heavier precipitation in tracts of mountains and hills where other geographic factors made dry farming impossible. State publications in 1909 greatly exaggerated the potential for success of these techniques in Wyoming.<sup>63</sup>

In that same year, Congressman Mondell pushed through the enlarged homestead law that opened up the region to 320-acre homesteads. Crook County led the initial rush to try dry farming techniques. Nearly half a million acres were broken up for dry farming by 1910, when a drought in that area wiped out much of the crop. Crook county farmers were more cautious after that, but the caution was not widespread.<sup>64</sup>

Further changes in the homestead laws in 1912 were just the sort of thing that appealed to a potential dry-farm homesteader. The settler could obtain his land in only three years and could be gone from the land for up to five months each year.<sup>65</sup>

Then came the rising prices for wheat as Europe went to war and extensive acreages of European wheat land went out of production under the surging tides of battle. What had been a rush for free land now became a

flood of homeseekers. Writing at the peak of the dry farming boom, historian I.S. Bartlett said the settlers had "nearly swamped the six United States Land Offices of the State with their homestead applications for dry lands." Within our Study Area he especially noted the "Chugwater Flats," where he said that four-thousand people built 700 homes in a two year period.<sup>66</sup>

The benchlands between the North Platte Valley proper and the Goshen Hole were settled up rapidly. So was a vast tract north of the Laramie River extending to and beyond the North Platte. In the new Campbell and Weston counties, and down into sections of Converse and Niobrara counties and homesteaders spread out rapidly. Smaller tracts were taken up elsewhere in areas topographic constraints limited the useable acreages. Some of the best land lay in fairly close proximity to the foot of the Big Horns, the Laramie Range, and the Black Hills, where the elevation brought increased probability of realistic crop yields through greater moisture supplies.

But across huge areas, the odds were long. The bet was, essentially; Could the homesteader on his own resources and available credit hold out long enough to win the land from the government with three season work, and then either be in a position to buy more land or to sell out a profit that would pay him for his three years work and his investment in livestock and equipment.

A lot of them did win, through fortuitous choice of land, adequate financial resources, hard work and good timing. But a lot of them lost! Around the fringes of probability, success at the peak of the wartime homesteading boom revolved essentially around the prospect of raising \$2.00 per bushel wheat with \$2.00 a day labor. And supporting a family in an area where gardening and dairying that went with midwestern subsistence farming might not be possible.

Homestead filings and patents granted do not tell the whole story for any given county. There was simultaneously the wave of homesteading to tie down grass and water and round out existing ranch holdings, and only a case-by-case evaluation of a given locality will sort out the land uses actually made on given tracts. We have examined a number of small to moderate sized tracts in the Sheridan area, some south of Gillette, and others in comparable environmental settings just across the line in Montana. We observe the following tendencies (we also caution that a very large scale study would be required for real analysis of region wide trends): The homesteaders

*This was a reason for not homesteading in these areas!*



who got in early and with reasonable resources often succeeded to a sufficient extent to let them buy out others and found some kind of viable operation for the times. The ones who homesteaded as late as 1918 often hung on to get their patents in 1921. But the people who got in just a bit late, and found their start up costs multiplied by the general 60% rise in most support and supply costs during 1914-1918, and then faced the 1919 drought which was followed by the 1921 depression of farm product prices often failed, or at least failed to found a viable operation and sold out the land. Many at the worst edge of the spectrum were lucky to get out with anything at all. The oil fields furnished an employment outlet for many.<sup>67</sup>

As a preliminary to further studies at some future times, we would suggest that rural post office openings and closings may offer one kind of data useful in setting up areas for comparative study.

The openings and closings of these post offices tend to bracket the entire span of boom-and-bust activity in a given area in the high plains. Figures are available for several of the counties within the Study Area. Settlers seem to have tended to apply for, and get a post office (most often a contract, 4th class office) as soon as there was any demonstrable cluster of them. There was always a political reluctance to do away with a post office until its receipts were nil. Thus it provides a very broad set of brackets from earliest hopes to final despair around community status.

The figures for Converse and Natrona Counties reflect an early trickle of settlers out along the old trail to take up river bottom lands at the very peak of the cattle boom. Otherwise, the various minerals related development tend to at times offset the variations that are probably farmer-homesteader occupancies.

But for Campbell County, there appears to be a pretty clearcut relationship between post offices and the rise and fall of homesteading on the marginal wheat lands. In what is now Campbell County, 3 post offices opened in the 1880's and closed in that same decade. One 1880's post office made it into the early 90's to succumb to the attraction of a railroad town nearby.

One 1890's post office survives (Gillette, the county seat and main railroad town). Three 1890's post offices did not last the decade out, two made it past the turn of the century and one into the 'teens.

One 1900's post office went under early, one lasted into the Thirties, two to the Forties and one after that.

There were more post offices founded in the 'Teens than in previous decades but they were shorter lived, on the average if they made it for a few years. Three did not last out the starting decade, four failed in the 1920's, three in the Thirties, two in the Forties and two into more recent times.

In the 1920's four of the new post offices failed to last to the end of the decade. Five failed in the 1930's. Three made it to the 1940's and three to later times.

Only three post offices were founded later, and they were all short lived affairs.

The researcher who assembled the checklists of post offices indicates three of the relatively long-lived minor post offices owed their longevity to oil exploration activity on the heels of the homestead period.<sup>68</sup>

In an earlier study, our organization examined one tract in excess of 4200 acres in which there had been six homesteader occupancies, only one of which lasted into the 1930's. In that tract of little less than half the land was now under cultivation, all by one operator whose buildings included much adjacent land.

In another case we examined we found a fairly typical failure story. The land was filed on in 1918. The homesteader built a fairly sturdy and ingenious semi-dug-out house in the crest of a sandstone ridge that was unusable otherwise. He pastured the rough breaks leading down a short distance to the Belle Fourche. He farmed every square inch he could, using horses for motive power. His ignorance of conditions on arrival was attested by an apparently unused corn planter falling apart near the ruin of a shed. He evidently farmed the land or hung on in some manner until he got the patent in 1921. In that crash year, he left, leaving his dryland tillage equipment sitting right in the furrows it made, on a tract that has not been farmed since. He sold the land not long after receiving the patent. And this may have been a story of relative success in that neighborhood!<sup>69</sup>

Up and down the entire high plains, it is reported that in excess of 35,000 homesteads were abandoned in the years 1920-1935.<sup>70</sup>

In our study area a part of the abandoned holdings went back into grazing land. A substantial part were bought up eventually by other



operators and developed into new operating units with varying, but sometimes considerable success as a part of larger scale farming methods in later periods.

Several tracts we studied near Gillette were involved in the cascading effect of the failures. Foreclosed by a Gillette bank, they were in turn used as security on that organization's obligations to a Billings bank and were seized by that institution which afterward went out of business itself!<sup>71</sup>

Dr. T.A. Larson has indicated that Wyoming had more bank failures in the 1920's than in any other decade.<sup>72</sup>

In our extensive interviews with rural people whose roots run back into the homesteading period, we have found that the 1920's homesteaders in many cases were doing something else for a living, and made their filings on speculation and with the knowledge that they really didn't have to live there much if at all to secure ownership. It was a good gamble even if one sold out at a low price, so long as one just didn't invest much in the required house, and did not really get involved in crop production. Most such holdings went to round out another ranch or farm, as we indicated earlier.

For the most part, the dryland homesteaders came from older farming areas of the midwest. A few but a visible component, came from the Scandinavian countries.

To date we have found evidence of only two organized group-settlements on homestead lands in the Study Area. One of these was the midwestern farm group that settled at Jireh in Niobrara County. They were people of modest resources but possessed of some religious cohesiveness and strong cultural aspirations. They founded a prep school and small "college" right along with their settlement, but could not sustain the overhead costs attendant their educational system in the size of community developed. Today only partial foundation ruins remain at the site of their community.<sup>73</sup> Another group of interest were Jewish homesteaders who settled near the eastern edge of the Study Area at Huntley. Primarily city people, relocated out of Chicago by an organization, many of them made a good adjustment to the land, but were lured back to the city as employment opportunities improved and productivity of the homesteads proved inadequate. A few remained in the community or nearby towns for many years.<sup>74</sup>

In the country north and east of Sheridan, some miners acquired coal lands at the peak of the World War I boom, largely by cash commutation. Some of these passed subsequently into the hands of banks and mortgage companies and charitable foundations and today form the core of development for some of the projected mines of the area.<sup>75</sup>

Under the provisions of the Bankhead-Jones Act, new programs were set in motion in the 1930's to improve the viability of some of the more critically troubled dry farming settlements. Some land needed to go back into grass, because it was just too poor, too dry, or otherwise deficient for wheat. Many wheat farms were too small to efficiently use the new power machinery. Some farmers could not hope to raise the capital to expand their holdings. The programs were designed to buy out the holdings whose owners wanted to sell, or to help others buy them out, enlarging the more viable units to an efficient size. Farmers who sold their land were given assistance in relocating on available lands elsewhere, such as on the irrigation projects. Federally-owned grazing lands in some tracts that were checkerboarded with farmlands were leased to grazing districts comprised of the farmers themselves.<sup>76</sup>

Major changes in the federal land laws in 1933-34 brought a near-halt to homesteading through the requirement that one had to be able to prove productivity adequate to support a family on the land. The Taylor Grazing Act provided the first real management of the western range lands by ending open and destructive competition for their forage. It gave a start to the process that led to today's management programs for the public land resources.<sup>77</sup>



## EDUCATION

For most Wyoming citizens outside Cheyenne or Laramie or the other railroad towns across the southern part of the state, education meant attendance at short sessions of elementary school, often as little as three months a year in the last quarter of the 19th Century. From the turn of the century on, the goal of the villages in the Study Area was to get a high school of their own. Most of them achieved that goal by the peak of the World War I economic boom. But changing conditions from 1921 on conspired to work for school district reorganization and consolidation at a much more rapid rate than occurred farther east on the plains, and by the beginning of World War II high schools were largely concentrated in the substantial and permanent incorporated towns and often served the better part of a county.<sup>78</sup>

There were two short lived experiments in higher education within the study area that deal with a liberal education in the settlement period, one the Big Horn Collegiate Institute in Big Horn, the other the "college" a sort of advanced prep school at the agricultural settlement at Jireh.<sup>79</sup>

Most students who could afford a college education either went to the University of Wyoming, or if they could afford it to places off down the rail network in Colorado or Nebraska, or more distant places. Albert Brown, a Tongue River rancher and ranch-raised boy spent his winters at VMI and his summers in stark contrast on roundups that ranged as far south as the Platte.<sup>80</sup>

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PART IV RECENT HISTORY OF THE CASPER DISTRICT, SINCE 1940.



### INTRODUCTION

Recent history is often, of necessity, the least definitive history, if only because so much of the raw material with which the historian would like to work is so dispersed as a part of the day-to-day operating records of businesses, organizations and institutions still active. It is also subject to the efforts of persons who participated in events to control access to data or to influence interpretations of data or events. But recent history forms a useful bridge to more clearly defined periods. It is also useful for economists, sociologists and others at work with the current and recent raw materials of history to understand the kind of view the historian has of the same recent past with which they work.

With this in mind, then we move into the consideration of the Study Area in the period since 1940.

### IMPACT OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Rapidly rising prices for farm and ranch products were the first and most direct impact of the outbreak of World in September of 1939. The rise was rapid enough to keep ahead of the general inflationary impact of the war on labor costs and supplies and materials, and gave Wyoming's farmers and ranchers their first taste of real prosperity in twenty years.

Other areas of the economy felt the direct effects of wartime demand. This was particularly true of the market for oil, natural gas and coal.

Beyond this stimulation of the economy, there were other changes of mixed effect. Tourism came practically to a standstill in the months after the U.S. entered the War in 1941. With thousands of young men from the state entering the armed forces, there was no longer a need for federal employment programs and the CCC, WPA and other depression-born programs closed down. This brought development work at Fort Laramie National Historic Site, at Devil's Tower National Monument (which had both seen much useful development under those programs) as well as Lake Guernsey State Park to a halt. Transfers of federal funding to the war effort brought a halt to the exhibits work of the National Park Service museum laboratories for Guernsey State Park, with only about half of the exhibits in place.

Only two wartime military installations were built within the Study Area, a sizeable air base near Casper, and a prisoner-of-war camp near Douglas. Both of these were closed down at the end of the War. The most lasting impact of military construction came with the transfer of the Casper base to local authorities, giving that community the makings of a major commercial air terminal.

Many people in Wyoming expected a post-war depression of comparable magnitude to that of 1921, but wartime industrialization, the development of extensive overseas markets in part through the reconstruction grants and loans program, and extensive accumulation of capital and consumer-spending reserves cushioned the transition to peacetime conditions.

EXPANDING AND CHANGING MINERALS DEVELOPMENT





### COAL MINING

After the end of the War, only the mines at Monarch and at Wyodak remained active, along with the new open pit mines of Big Horn Coal Company that had opened during the War. The interrelationship of these mining activities is an interesting one.

At Wyodak, Black Hills Power Company in 1946 built a mine-mouth steam-turbine generating station, and linked it with a transmission line to their network in the southern Black Hills. This was the first such installation in the Study Area.

During the peak of wartime coal mining at Sheridan, the relatively small-scale operations of Big Horn Coal Company went almost unnoticed, but they were very important to the future of the region. In 1943, the company was formed and secured coal contracts for power-plant coal to be used at the Hanford Engineering Works in Washington, where the government had a top-secret project under way that ultimately produced the materials for the second atomic bomb in 1945.

The Big Horn Coal Company's first mine was developed in a tract of state school land in the hills north of Tongue River. The distinctive fact about the operation was that it was an open-pit mine in which the mining was done essentially with heavy-construction machinery, leased at first from Peter Kiewits Sons construction companies. The system worked, and produced coal with much more productivity per man-hour than the best of the underground operations in the Sheridan area.

This company sought to expand its operations through federal coal leases at the end of the War. The Sheridan-Wyoming Coal Company, with a complex layout of old mines and equipment could not hope to compete effectively in the coal markets against open pit operations. At first, they tried to force the Federal Government not to lease coal lands to Big Horn Coal. Beginning in 1946, an extensive chain of litigation ran clear up to the Supreme Court. The ultimate outcome of these law suits found Sheridan-Wyoming Coal Company in a restraint-of-trade situation. While the battles were being fought in court, the costs of underground mining rose steadily as unions forced miners' wages upward steadily, as strengthened safety standards increased both capital and manpower requirements, and the old mines moved closer to a point of diminishing productivity.

Finally in 1953, Sheridan Wyoming Coal Company shut down its underground operations and sold its coal lands to Big Horn Coal Company and

its affiliates. The final blow had been the conversion of the Burlington locomotive power to diesel engines. The first of these arrived in Sheridan "as an experiment" in 1947, and by 1953 the Burlington used no more coal.

Since 1953, Big Horn Coal and other companies have progressively expanded their open-pit operations, and open-pit coal mining is now the major force behind a considerable economic boom in the Sheridan area.

Fortuitously, other areas of the Sheridan economy expanded enough between 1940 and 1953 to absorb most of the work force of the underground mines with minimal social and economic dislocation. The old company towns were closely linked into Sheridan's society and economy from the first, and most mining families had developed close ties to the town over the years. Today the main reminder of underground mining in the area lies in the names of the Polish, Italian, and other groups of families who got their start in the mines, but who, today are integrated into almost every type of business in the Sheridan area, where their energy, skill and cooperation have made a strong contribution to community development.

A major new open pit mining operation started near Glenrock in 1958, to fuel the newly constructed Dave Johnson Power Plant of Pacific Power and Light Company.

Then, in the early 1970's large-scale open pit operations like those above began to open up in the Gillette area, supplying fuel in the form of low-sulphur coal to powerplants in Colorado and in the upper Midwest.

## OIL AND GAS

A booming post-war market for petroleum fuels and for petroleum as raw material for the nation's growing chemical industries caused a period of intensive oil exploration and development. The Salt Creek, Shannon and Lance Creek and Big Muddy fields all continued to produce significant amounts of oil. But major new fields in the Gillette and Moorcroft areas opened up in the 1950's and 1960's, and Gillette began its rapid growth in the latter decade. From a cow-town of about 2,000, it grew to an oil boomtown of perhaps 12,000 in a period of about three years. Completion of the exploration and development phase of oil field operations dropped the population to around 7,000 almost as quickly, but many of the displaced workers had expected this and found new employment in the North Slope fields of Alaska and in overseas oil operations. Oil has been important to the economy of practically every county seat town in the area.

URANIUM

Government stockpiling of uranium for military and scientific purposes in the late 1940's and early 1950's launched an extensive prospecting boom in that period. At one point there was extensive controversy between ranchers and prospectors over access to the Taylor Grazing Lands of the BLM.

Prospecting has continued to date. Major mining operations now appear to be opening up in the Douglas area, and that community is going through the same rapid phase of growth that coal brought to Gillette.



## CASPER AND THE MINERALS INDUSTRY

In 1940, Casper was already a center for the scientific, technical, and financial activities of the oil industry. The continued search for new petroleum resources and the increasing technological complexity of the business all fueled a prolonged expansion of the community. In the early 1960's many of the major oil companies, however, consolidated their business and accounting operations in Denver, Tulsa and points in Texas, and this drew away appreciable numbers of highly paid workers. Casper's local wholesale and retail economy ran on a sort of plateau for a period, before new minerals development triggered a new phase in the economy of this experienced boom-town.

With the growth of uranium and coal operations, Casper has retained its lead in the number of engineering and scientific firms supportive to minerals development and has expanded to meet the needs of these industries.

Other towns in the region have developed additional resources of this kind, but in the main these are at the local-services level, with Casper providing the more complex backup services and facilities. Many Casper firms and institutions that made considerable money in oil development have diversified their holdings to cover other energy sources.

## THE POWER INDUSTRY

Electric power has played an important part in the changing economy of the Study Area in the years since 1940. Related to both minerals, through its use of fields, and to irrigation through its involvement with water resources, it deserved some separate discussion.

High production costs made electricity something that only the moderate sized communities could put to work in earlier periods. In 1911, consumers in the Sheridan area were paying 12¢ per kilowatt-hour for electricity that was at first used almost exclusively for lighting. But production efficiency continually increased, and a proliferating volume and variety of uses were found, bringing the costs of production and distribution steadily downward.

Electricity moved out onto the farms and ranches in the very late part of the 1930's, when REA organizations went into action. The first of these were founded in Lingle and in Wheatland in 1937 and the movement spread fairly rapidly over the study area.

The irrigation projects on the North Platte River were brought into use as power sources. Major hydroelectric installations were part of the system of dams built primarily for irrigation purposes. The Bureau of Reclamation produces from 45,000,000 to 60,000,000 kwh at Seminoe dam and power plant. A new plant completed at Alcova went into operation in the summer of 1955, with a capacity greater than that of Seminoe. The Fremont Canyon Power Plant of Pathfinder Dam, another plant at Kortess Dam, and a new dam with power plant at Gelndo all went into operation in the mid to late Fifties.

Available power from hydroelectric units varies appreciably with the season, and steam power plants such as Dave Johnson plant, started in 1958 and expanded several times since are a major factor in providing a year around power supply in the area. The Dave Johnson plant has a generating capacity of 750 Megawatts.

Antiquated hydroelectric equipment at Lingle was shut down in the Fifties, and in 1976 the old steam plant at Sheridan was closed for the same reason.

New power plants are among the most talked of possibilities in conjunction with coal development, but to date the new Black Hills Power Company air-cooled steam generating station at Wyodak is the main such unit in actual construction.

AGRICULTURE SINCE 1940



## RANCHING

Improvements in motor transportation, and the use of Citizens Band communication have facilitated management of larger ranching units in this period. Constantly rising equipment costs and labor costs have forced much of the consolidaton of ranches in this period. Ranchers have only had two periods, one, during the Korean War, and another in the early 1970's, when cattle and sheep prices have provided a really comfortable margin above real production costs.

Constantly rising land values in this period have had two effect. First, for old, well-established operating units, the rising land values have provided the capital for modernizing equipment and methods, by serving as a base for credit that would have otherwise been difficult to obtain.

But the second effect is to increase the difficulty of entering into ranching operations or expanding the acreage of an existing unit. This is particularly acute in areas where the demand for rural residence tracts, the demand for recreational land by people with money from outside the community, and the hope of continued local demand because of the minerals boom have worked together. In a strip along the front of the Big Horns, about 40 miles wide, and extending from Buffalo to the Montana boundary, range land scales upward form \$150 per acre. In terms of beef, mutton, wool and hide production, this land could only justify capitalization in the area of \$60 to \$65 per acre, and the resultant disparity means that we have come a long way from the days of free greass. The same phenomena exists over smaller areas in the Black Hills and around Gillette, Douglas and Casper.



### DRYLAND FARMING

The dryland farmer, too, has operated most of the time in a cost-price squeeze in the Post World War II era. This has forced still more consolidation of units, though without the disastrous regional results of the combined drought/depression cycle of the 1920's and 1930's.

Large scale equipment, the use of aerial-sprayed weed killers, and extensive use of fertilizers have all increased productivity per acre and per man hour. Dryland farming is now almost exclusively a wheat farming operation in the Study Area.

TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION



### RAILROADS

Railroad operations changed little from 1940-1970 in the Study Area. There was no new construction, the conversion to diesel power did not materially affect internal operations or customer service, and radio-communication was the main innovation.

Since 1970, however, substantial new trackage has been built to serve the mining industry. Heavier train loadings have required practically all the old track to be upgraded to heavier rail. Now coal is the main rail cargo moving out of the state and the study area. Significant amounts of petroleum products and uranium add to the new railroad expansion. Railroad payrolls in Sheridan have more than trippled since 1970!

### HIGHWAYS

Almost all the highways mileage in the Study Area has been widened, resurfaced and realigned in the past 37 years. In addition the development of the Interstate Highway system's mileage in the Study Area has nearly reached completion. Considering population density, the Study Area has one of the best highway networks in the nation. Automobile ownership, high at the beginning of the period has expanded still more. 150 miles seems to be the effective competitive radius for the area's retail stores in major centers like Casper. This facility of travel draws some shoppers out of the area to Cheyenne and also to Billings, Montana, Rapid City South Dakota, and Denver, Colorado. But in the main the local communities have in a generally expanding development, weathered the attendant changes well.

### COMMERICAL AIR TRANSPORTATION

Following the expansion of its airport facilities after World War II, Casper has developed into one of the region's major commercial air transport centers. Frontier Airlines provides service to Billings, Denver, Cheyenne, Rock Springs, and other points. Western Airlines serves both Casper and Sheridan. Casper provides an interchange point to Western's service to Salt Lake City and Minneapolis.

Indications are that residents of the area travel a lot by air, more than most Americans.

Some short line service, occasioned by the minerals boom, reaches Gillette, and other such lines are under discussion at this writing.

#### TELEPHONE SERVICE

Microwave transmission has markedly improved long distance service in the area, and the telephone has largely replaced the telegraph for commercial communications since World War II.

Citizens Band Radio and commercial and governmental use of radio have come to supplement telephone service for many purposes, such as law enforcement, minerals field communications, and in the ranch country.

#### RADIO AND TELEVISION

All the county seat towns in the Study Area now have commercial radio stations. A major TV complex in Casper reaches the greater part of the Study Area. Satellite stations from Rapid City are under development, and most cities in the study area have cable connections that let viewers see any program that other viewers in the country can. This has probably been a prime influence in changing customs, styles, and the general life style, but it is a bit early to do historical (as opposed to sociological) investigation of this.

#### TOURISM

The tourist, so far as this study area is concerned has become almost entirely an automobile-tourist within the period since World War II. With the end of WW II gasoline rationing, the tourist trade boomed, and has been on the upswing ever since. From 1945 through 1972, the tourist traffic increased on the average of 15% each year. Since 1972 the rates of increase have slowed to some degree, but have never fallen below 4%.

At present I25/90 at Sheridan carries around 1,500,000 out of state tourists each year. About half of these go over the Big Horns near Dayton, and the rest enter or exit the Study Area at Parkman. Highway 16 at Buffalo carries about half a million persons over the Big Horns. The



highway complex at Casper serves around 2,500,000 tourists.

The Study Area is still a "bridge" between the major destination attractions the Black Hills and Yellowstone. There is only a low level of tourist development in the Wyoming portion of the Black Hills. The initial affect of the interstate highway system was to push travelers through the Study Area faster and concentrate tourist service developments at major travel nodes on the system. But expansion of secondary attractions such as Fort Laramie, Devils Tower, Fort Caspar, and a number of state parks and recreation areas have increased tourist holding power of the Study Area to some degree.



NOTES ON PART IX

In view of the difficulty of doing an in-depth historical study outlined in the introduction to this part, we are not, at least in this draft, using conventional footnoting. Our synthesis of this period is drawn from a broad range of sources. Some of the most useful were:

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Thomas S. Davis, Electric Power in Wyoming, (Laramie, University of Wyoming, ).

and a host of recent date planning documents in various formats. Mr. Don Brayton of Sheridan's Bank of Commerce was most helpful in delineating rangeland values and productivity. Mr. Bruce Beaudoin of Pacific Power and Light furnished information on their system. Mr. Jack Ratchye of Big Horn Coal Company supplied documents and information on the change from underground to surface mining techniques.

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